PARTISAN REVIEW

Joyce p259

MAY-JUNE, 1942

Josephine, The Songstress

a story by

Franz Kafka

MAX EASTMAN and JAMES T. FARRELL
An Exchange of Letters

LIONEL TRILLING
The Sense of the Past

SAUL BELLOW
The Mexican General (a story)

ERNEST NAGEL
The Historian as Moralist

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To Our Readers

We are happy to announce that the response to our recent appeal for funds to carry on P.R. has been most generous. As we go to press, 131 subscribers have contributed a total of $1236 to the Publication Fund. This is $264 short of the sum estimated as needed to finance the magazine another year, but contributions are still coming in and we are hopeful that by the time this appears most of the relatively small sum still required will have come in.

We want to thank our suscribers for their most heartening response to our appeal, and to urge any who have not contributed but plan to do so to let us hear from them as soon as possible. We should also, of course, welcome contributions from our newsstand readers.

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PARTISAN REVIEW

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The Mexican General

Saul Bellow

THEY CAME WALKING, the whole group of them, along the short pillared, red paved colonnade, the boys in front struggling with the baggage, the bodyguards behind smiling pleasantly.

"This is your room, the center one Senor el General," said the clerk who had hurried from the dining room to meet them. "That on the left is for the ladies and this on the right for the two gentlemen. Everything is just as you asked for it in your telegram."

"These are like the doors of a church," said Maria. She took the large brass key from the clerk and tried it in the cumbersome, old-fashioned lock. It did not open. She twisted the handles and pushed first with one high heel and then the other.

"You are not strong enough, Maria," Eulalia said. "Give it back." And Gloria too said, "You can't do it, let him." Everyone laughed. The General smiled a moment as though he acknowledged but did not entirely pardon their privilege to be boisterous, and then he said, "Let the boy open it."

With one hatbox still held under his arm the boy jerked the doors forward as he turned the key and they sprang open.

"There," said Eulalia. She and Gloria ran to the beds and rocked them. "They're soft. This one is nearly as good as the one I have at home," said Gloria pulling up a corner of the sheets to look at the mattress. "Do you like the room Eulalia?"

"It's a little old fashioned," said Eulalia, "but it's nice."

The wooden walls were painted dark red; the floor was made of smooth green blocks and the bedspreads were of green taffeta, rose trimmed. There were two windows, high and narrow, with panes of starred glass facing the court where they could hear water rushing over the floor and wet clothes slapped on the washing stone.

"Whose picture is that?" Maria asked the boy, pointing.

"Look there are several and they're all the same."

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"That is Quiroga, Senorita," said the boy.

"Who was that, a saint, Felipe?"

"I don't know," said the General. "Perhaps."

"He looks more like a king than a saint with that rich costume and black beard," said Maria.

The General went to his room to see to the proper unpacking of his clothes. He found that the boy they had sent from the office had already opened his wardrobe trunk and was transferring the suits to ordinary hangers. There! he knew what always happened the moment his back was turned. "Not that way, not that way!" he said striding up to him and snatching the hanger away. "That makes the shoulders bag. Can't they furnish new hangers? Like this." The boy watched him. He was only a child, half-grown, with childish eyes, yellowish brown, dressed in a peasant shirt and trousers tied close at the ankles. Probably he had never seen a suit like this before. Imagine hanging a coat that way. It was the English salmon tweed with the long lapels. "Always remember to do it as I've shown you."

"Si, *patrón.*"

Someone rapped lightly at the door.

"Who is it?" asked the General.

"The clerk, Senor el General. I have brought the registry book."

"Oh. Very well, come in."

The clerk remained standing until the General whose eyes were still on the boy said without turning around, "Sit down and write."

"I am sorry to disturb you, Senor el General."

"After you are done with the suits put the shirts away over there. Be sure you have clean paper in the drawers."

"Si, *patrón.*" The boys brown fingers were spotted deeper brown from tobacco, but they seemed clean enough.

"He has not been here long?" he asked the clerk.

"A week, no more. Our more experienced boy is in town on an errand. He . . ."

"Never mind," said the General impatiently. "Write as follows: 'General J. and three nieces.' "

"Si, Senor el General." He wrote. "And the others?"

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"Two lieutenants who are accompanying me. They will sign for themselves, I will send them."

"Thank you, Senor el General," said the clerk. He withdrew. The General paused a moment before the mirror and brushed back a loop of hair which had dropped over his forehead.

"Are you finished there?"

"Immediately, *patrón*."

He tossed a coin to the boy stiffly, pitching from the elbow, and went slowly outside. There were tourists on the lawn, reading and dozing. In the lake the wind was blowing the hasty little boats, dispersing them from the center towards the mountain shores and the islands. Nets hung drying on the bushes. At opposite ends of the walk sat Paco and Citrón. Citrón was in civilian clothes and he dressed well too, the General had to admit, even if too quietly. A young man had no business wearing such dark shades especially when he was so saturnine. But he was good looking with that little sportsman's moustache of his. He noticed that there were several American women at a shaded table with whom Citrón was already exchanging glances one by one. "He'll have them all at his mercy," thought the General. "He can have his pick of them for tonight, likely. But they're all old; old hens." Citrón seemed to prefer Americans. His first wife had been an American and not a poor one by any means, he had heard. Well, what good had come of it? Citrón even with that advantage and with all his good family and superior education was still a lieutenant of police. At his age he had already been a man of importance in Jalisco.

Paco, at his end, was slumped in a chair, asleep, his fat thumbs in his holster belt, his sombrero falling forward on his face. Did he ever know what was going on! The General looked at him contemptuously—those plump legs so heavy in the calves of his breeches, those cheap shiny boots, that exaggerated tooled holster. He raised his chin to Citrón who rose and came to him. That rather stocky blonde was watching. "Tell Paco," said the General fixing his eyes on a vine behind Citrón's head, "to do his sleeping indoors and at the proper time." He said this in a very low voice but his annoyance seemed to increase with every word. Not only the blonde but the other women also were looking over at him. "Everybody is staring. I am going in."

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Very casually Citrón approached Paco and bending over him he said, "You'd better sit up, you're making the boss mad."

"What's that," said Paco starting, "what's the matter? What is it?"

"The boss is sore."

"At me? What have I done?"

"Slept at your post, it seems."

"Sleeping? I? Why that's nonsense. I just close my eyes a minute and he gets mad."

"He didn't like it. You know how tight he can get around the mouth."

"Yes, I know, like a film star." A red cloud spread on Paco's forehead. "So he had you tiptoe over . . ."

"Don't be angry with me, I'm just his messenger."

"I'm not angry."

"But you look it. Quiet yourself. Give me a cigarette."

Paco slipped a package of *Virginias* out of the breast pocket of his serge shirt. "He picks on me," he protested, "picks and picks!"

"He's just nervous, he's had a hard time in the city. You were in Iguala you don't know how much trouble the poor man had. That's why he came up here to Patzcuaro, to get a rest. The strain, you know, the fatigue of making so many statements and posing for so many photographs. He suffered more than the *viejo* who was killed."

"Oh, that's so, eh?" said Paco smiling. "Getting in his last publicity."

"One must take one's opportunities with the public. Do you think there are no other jobs besides that of *Jefe?* Felipe is politically promising. He's been building a great career for himself from his youth on and you wouldn't expect him to lose an opportunity. As his father's son . . ."

"His father? What did he do?"

"A very great man—in Jalisco, of course, but a great man. A friend of Madero."

Paco smiled up at Citrón who spread his hands out before him and looked at his nails."

"Also a friend of Obregon, Huerta, Carranza, Morones, America, the peasants, anyone who would have him. A friendly man. His son follows in his footsteps, didn't you know that?"

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"Hadn't heard," said Paco laughing.

"I'd better return to my post," said Citrón. "Put your hat right, your net is showing." Paco wore a net to keep his hair in place.

"Does it show now?" he asked adjusting it.

"No," said Citrón flipping away his match. "It's all right." He went back to his seat.

At two o'clock the General knocked at the girls' door.

"Who's that out there?" called Eulalia.

The General instead of answering knocked once more and she opened the door a crack and looked out.

"Don't make me raise my voice and shout," he said severely. "You know I don't like that."

"I'm sorry Felipe, I should have opened it right away. We're dressing."

"I'm ready to eat."

"So am I, but Maria hasn't finished. Gloria is just about finished."

"Will they be long?"

"I don't think so."

"I'll wait inside; I don't want to loiter in the passage. Hurry up, Veracruzana."

"*Ahorita vengo.*"

He sat down on the bed between Eulalia and Gloria who was putting on her shoes. "You like it here, children?" he asked.

"We love it," said Eulalia.

"We'll visit the town this afternoon and tomorrow we'll go to Janitzio if we can find a decent boat."

Maria came in from the bathroom and stood before them pulling her stockings over her delicate brown knees and gartering them halfway on her thighs.

"Those are very pretty stockings," said the General bending forward to stroke them.

"Aren't they? I bought them on Avenida Londres. There was a sale. We all got some. Look what you're doing," she said scoldingly to Gloria, "you're sitting on my skirt. Give it here."

"Hurry, *Veracruzana*, we're hungry."

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"I couldn't help it Felipe, I had to wait to the last. It's their fault; I would have been ready long ago."

"That isn't so, you're just slower than we are. We started together," said Gloria.

"Never mind, never mind whose fault it is. Don't spend so much time on your hair, *Veracruzana,* we'll leave you behind."

"I'm coming, wait!" cried Maria stooping to the mirror with her combs. "What did you do with my hairpins?" Gloria powdered her narrow throat from chin to base and looking down with a serious expression brushed the fallen specks of powder from her black dress.

"Ready?" asked the General.

They were ready.

The dining room was also the bar. It was very crowded and noisy.

"Why do the Americans talk so loudly; they must be nearly deaf; they can't hear each other," laughed Eulalia. "Isn't that so Felipe?"

"They're a low class of Americans."

"I don't like the sound of it," said Gloria.

"Citrón speaks it very well," said Maria.

"Yes, he's a great success with it," the General said. The waiter was laying a fresh cloth. "Bring us some vermouth," he told him.

"I want beer," said Maria, "*Carta Blanca.*"

"Our little Negress is becoming a drunkard."

"Oh, Felipe!" the girls screamed.

"It's true," he said with a light smile. "When I brought her home from the Reforma the other night she was absolutely drunk."

"Oh no, I wasn't."

"All the *Veracruzanas* are like that, they love very much to drink."

"There are Citrón and Paco sitting over there," said Eulalia.

The drinks came and the General poured them. "For you, for you, for me," he said as the amber vermouth ran to the point of each stem. "And for the *Veracruzana,* the drunkard, beer." He gave a little slap to the cork but nothing like joviality was to be seen in his long, austere face, and his lips moved very little when

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he spoke, and those who turned around to see why there was laughter at his table failed to connect it with him.

"*El Jefe* is having a huge time," said Citrón to Paco who was sprinkling cheese on his chicken. "A great and serious mind is playing. There you have a picture. But you know, he deserves credit; he's pretty old for such a life, a man in his fifties."

"Maybe it's the Indian part of him," said Paco.

"Whatever it is it serves him well. You were in Iguala, you don't know. He's a very energetic man. It's really too bad you weren't there, I think you would have appreciated it. By the time you got back the *viejo* had been put away and *el Jefe's* great hour was over."

"I heard; on the radio."

"Ah, but you missed seeing him become an important actor of history. No sooner did it happen than *el Jefe* realized that he was going to be carried at least a short way on the principal current and that the eyes of the world were watching him as well as the old *russo*. After all, it isn't everyone from Jalisco who gets mixed up in such events. I don't think Felipe knew fully what the *viejo* was. I am sure he never read any of his books. But he had a fair enough idea as you could tell from his deportment. He has great talent."

"They're looking this way."

"Who, Felipe? No, only the girls. He wouldn't do anything of the sort. He won't notice us. He's very firm on his dignity with us. You know, Paco, he has a serious problem; he does not want to show us his lighter side but at the same time he wants to outface everyone."

"Especially me."

"It's a little different with you. I don't know why but he has to prove something to me—that he has the right to despise me. That's what success means to him. There are people like that. He'll make them weep in Jalisco."

"They're refusing dessert," said Paco. "I don't think we're to be allowed to finish. Yes, they're leaving." He put down his napkin. The girls were already at the door. The General signed the bill and they strolled across the grounds towards the road that led to town.

On their left lay the mountains, treeless and red. Maguey and

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thin vivid bushes grew on the coarse red banks of the streams that rushed down towards the soft humps of the lower hills. The red dirt was spilled and drifted over the road. A squad of soldiers drilling in a nearby field moved clumsily in the mud. The drummer off to the side stood beating vigorously, never missing a stroke but the marchers stumbled heavily and out of rhythm.

"I can't walk a step farther, it's too wet," said Eulalia.

They stopped and when the two lieutenants came up the General sent Paco back for the car and they retreated to a dry place and waited.

"It's these shoes that are open at the toes," complained Eulalia. "One can't walk in them in the country." She exhibited the wet tips of her stockings. "Take them off," said Maria. "I think that's what I'll do." She turned aside, rolled them down and stuffed them in her purse. The sun cleared a small cloud and even in the few moments it was visible drove off some of the dampness so that the drum pounded on in clearer air. A burro loaded to the nose with charcoal sacks picked his way around the puddles. The peasant who drove him took off his hat when he greeted them and smiled through the square black bang that fell over his eyes.

He passed; they were silent. Then Eulalia began to giggle. The girls smiled.

"What's the matter, silly?"

"I wonder what he thought of my painted toes. He kept looking and looking at them."

The General did not smile, but he did not frown either, and with his arms folded, his face turned to the marchers seemed neither to have heard nor yet not to have heard.

The car appeared, a bulky grey Cadillac that heaved itself slowly over the uneven, shallow roll of the road. Citrón stood by to help them in and sat himself in the front seat beside Paco. The General took Maria's hand and also Gloria's but though his fingers worked actively at the sharp points of their nails his face jutted expressionless over his dark brown shirt. The car crossed the bridge into town; huge red bubbles floated in the pools and farther down lay a fresh new streak of bank the stream had laid open.

"Pull up there, right over there," the General instructed Paco when he drove into the Zócalo.

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"What is there to see here, Felipe?" asked Gloria as she stepped down.

"A cinema," said Eulalia, "See it?"

"Oh, yes, look, see how funny it is: '*Hoy—Rosa de Xochimilco!*"

"It looks like an old barracks," said Maria.

"What else is there? Citrón, have you been here before?"

"Yes," said Citrón.

"Do you know of anything?"

"A museum," said Citrón, "leather shops, churches. There are some very beautiful churches here."

"Show us, we'd love to see one, wouldn't we?"

"For lack of something better," said Maria. "Let us go, by all means." The General nodded to Citrón.

"The nearest is along this way, up the hill."

"Can't we drive there?" said Maria.

"I'm afraid the street is too narrow," replied Citrón. "It isn't very far."

"The *Veracruzana* must always be riding," said the General. "A short walk won't hurt." He himself took the lead. Eulalia and Gloria ran to join him while Maria came more slowly after and the two lieutenants as always followed at a distance. It was a steep climb. The cobblestones were sharp and unless one wore thick soled shoes bruised the feet. The low roofed houses had bright, rusting walls and pink doors; the animals, the rough haired dogs and long legged pigs had reddened feet and bellies.

"They are waiting for her," said Paco. The General and the two others had halted. Maria, however, did not increase her pace. "She takes her time. That *Veracruzana* is all right, she's the best in the lot. It's their black blood, it makes them proud. She's the prettiest too. Only that Gloria is fit for him, the tough kind with the thin necks. Eulalia is a kitten. But that *Veracruzana*—hasn't she got too much fire for this sort of life, I wonder?"

"You forget that *el Jefe* is a great man. Paco," said Citrón. "A man, as I was telling you, who has already been recognized by history, two weeks ago in Coyoacan. That makes the difference for a girl like Maria who has probably heard of it."

"History! You mean money."

"Money no doubt plays its part but there are plenty of

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younger rich men. She's a very handsome woman and my guess would be she has plenty of other opportunities even if Felipe does play the oldest bull with her."

"The oldest bull; that's good!"

"Oh he does it with dignity, always dignity. But why do you think he's so short with us?"

"*Tienes razón.* I never thought of that."

"He does it as befits historical figures. He's very history-conscious. I might go so far as to call him a history-ridden man—in a very egotistical fashion."

"Again history. You've got it on the brain."

"In a way. So has he. I suspected it for a long time but never realized it until his triumph at Coyoacan, which places him now beside the brave *caciques* who resisted Cortés there. But perhaps you don't know about that?"

"No," said Paco goodnaturedly. "I don't pretend to be more than a cop, *hombre.* That sort of thing is for educated chaps like you."

"Who in turn are also only cops. That's what you mean I suppose."

"Oh no, no!" Paco protested.

"It's perfectly all right. People take me for a disappointed or embittered man whereas I am only an unambitious one."

"But what did happen at Coyoacan besides what I already know?"

"It didn't all happen in Coyoacan, it merely began there; the rest took place at the *Cruz Verde* hospital and at the mortician's at Tacuba 4 and elsewhere. The main event you know, the rest is a kind of garnish that the world must imagine for itself. Everyone knows about the chief figures, the old man and the assassin. Then among the lesser—his guards, the old woman, the assassin's mistress, friends of all kinds—enters Felipe in the role of the State and myself, assistant and messenger, which function I share with the telephone. The role is minor and incidental, a non-essential but typical category. A happening can, of course, take place without us singly but would not be quite as it was if we were not there. Somebody uses our knife to cut down the body, sends us to notify the widow, we hold the sponge for the soldier, are called upon to hand up the nails whether in the building of triumphal stands,

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crosses or gallows, are the tenth or twelfth men in the firing squad and so on. In short 'the others' who crowd in at the doors and are never thought the issue of the struggle but who are nevertheless those whom leaders lead, oppressors oppress and saviors save. You follow? Still in the excitement they are overlooked, and it can't be helped, and since it must be should be so.

"But to get on with it: we arrived about an hour after it happened and *el Jefe* took charge. The old man had already been removed but one of the young doctors who was still there told me there wasn't much of a chance, that the Belgian, or whatever he is, had gotten through. There he was having his head bound, sobbing. They showed us where his hand had been bitten during the struggle in the study. I had a good look while they were bandaging him; his face was working, his eyes were shut. He reminded me very much of my oldest brother in his features and curly hair; though you wouldn't have wanted to compare him to any man at such a time and least of all one of your own there was a reason, for as a kid he was a wild one and once struck an elderly aunt and was beaten for it by my father before the rest of us. However that may be, Felipe came to get a brief look too, as he was blindly crying, and then returned to the secretaries who were making their depositions and where, by the way, most of the reporters were to be found. His picture was taken in both ensembles. He had no orders for me at the moment so I stayed with the assassin. I have seen better behaved murderers than that one. I felt sorry for the *viejo*. He deserved a more manly antagonist. Everything about him was of much consequence and all based on principle, principle. I remember him expounding the principle when they chopped up his room with bullets and how he complained in statements that rang in with the French Revolution and ended with predictions of victory. But maybe since the assassin had undergone all that was necessary he *was* the right man. He looked unfit and I couldn't discover the character necessary for it in him, but he must have had it. Well, that's a fine point and it may be just proper that death for the *viejo* should come womanish, shrieking and sinewless since he had always downed whatever of that there was in him.

"But he was a pretty cold dish, the young hero, any way you took him. I kept wondering if, apart from the politics of it (which I don't know much about) he had not actually tried to equalize

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himself as a person with the old man by killing him, if every way outclassed and subordinated he had not thought: 'Well, at least we are equals when I pierce your head with a pick, and you are even less when you die.' That's to be considered.

"After he had made his own statements to the press *el Jefe* had more pictures taken in the disorder of the study pointing to the overturned table and then came to see if the Belgian could be questioned. The doctor advised against it. The old woman had gone to the hospital and that was our next stop."

They had reached the top of the street and now advanced across a short plain of grass grown cobbles towards the church. The girls as they entered crossed themselves and covered their heads and the men took off their hats. They moved slowly towards the center and from there in silence made their inspection of the ceiling's heavy greenish giltwork and of the walls whose brown gloom took in the confession boxes and holy figures.

"This must be a very old place," said the General. "Citrón, do you know how old?"

"I should say about three hundred years. The sacristan will be able to tell you."

"It is very beautiful in architecture," said the General. "Very fine. Are there no guides here?"

"There must be a sacristan around somewhere."

The General and the girls set off to circle the church while Paco and Citrón retired to the rear of the dark nave.

"Where was I?" said Citrón. "That digression threw me off. Had we come to the hospital?"

"You were just arriving."

"Oh yes. It was about nine when we got there. We were told the old man had lost consciousness. Felipe went in to see him. That chap from *La Prensa* was there, you know him, Roberto, and he wanted me to slip him in for a picture. I told him not yet, he'd have to see the boss. 'He'll let you in by and by,' I said. 'You know he appreciates the value of a lively press.' Sure enough when *el Jefe* came out and they had taken him before the door he gave his permission. 'But no noise,' he said. 'Please respect the presence of the Senora.' We passed in, Felipe going immediately to the head of the bed, and they took the ones which were later called, '*El gran lider en su lecho de muerte.*' The old woman was in a chair

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by the window, her back turned. The old man, his face alone appearing between the cone of bandages and the sheet, seemed already dead. There were two stripes of blood running from his temple to his beard. Felipe hustled us out when one of the doctors showed up which meant, I suppose, that he had not asked permission. He stayed in the room. 'The General seems terribly concerned,' said Roberto. 'Is there anything in the story that he wanted to sell the old man extra protection after that machine gun episode last winter and that the old man told him off?' He's a shrewd egg, that Roberto. I said, 'There are stories and stories', and that put an end to it. I don't know myself if it's true. It could be."

"I suppose so," said Paco.

"Anyhow, since it was going to be a long night I went down with Roberto for a couple of Daiquiris and made a few phone calls and bought the papers, and there already was the whole business with *el Jefe's* pictures right in the middle as though it had all taken place for his sake. They had him in eight or ten poses sharing space with the old man in his commissar's coat, and there he stood pointing to the overturned table and holding the piolet with a handkerchief. 'I suppose this makes him a sure thing with the party in Jalisco. Will they make him a senator?' asked Roberto. 'A governor if they're hard up.'

"We went back and sat around with the others. *El Jefe* never left the room for long. He took to admitting reporters two and three at a time so that there was always somebody in there. And I kept taking calls in to him and had a good chance to watch him and, I say, for the limited man he is he had an exceptionally good understanding of the situation and behaved with marvelous *decoro*. Only he could feel no more than his own part of it. He knew nothing at all about the rest, the two old people and the murderer and what it meant to have an enemy at the other side of the world at whom you could never strike back. He is that way. For instance, take what he said before about the church. A man of culture when he is connected with a revolutionary government, Paco, can at least admire a church artistically. So with this great instinct of his he chooses just about the right thing to say without understanding the slightest bit. He arrives with the *touch*. That's the way he lives.

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"Several times he sent me down to see what's-his-name, the murderer, who was in another section. He slept some of the night and cried through the rest and it was impossible to get anything out of him. 'Better see that his pals don't get at him,' said Roberto, 'they'd like nothing better than to lay hands on him.' I put a heavier guard around him and returned. Then no less than five times he sent me to take a look at the girl. He was convinced she had a part in it though all the testimony there was made it obvious she knew nothing. I told him so. 'Do as I tell you,' he said."

"That's exactly how he would say it. You imitate him marvelously," said Paco.

"I did as he told me," continued Citrón. "And so it went half through the night till towards morning with the crowd impatient for something to happen out came *el Jefe* sober faced but composed and with a great air of portentousness. He shut the door carefully and waited till he had everyone around him and then he announced: 'He is dead.' Looking at his watch, 'He died three minutes and forty seconds ago.' The reporters ran to the phones, the photographers pushed forward. The old woman had been leaning, half lying out of her chair with her face buried in the bedclothes and when we rushed in she arose and shielded herself. A secretary led her out; *el Jefe* ordered a way cleared and escorted her as far as the elevator."

Citrón paused, for the party had emerged from the arch of the west transept and still looking ceilingward drifted down the bowed plank floor to the aisle. "The tour is over, I think," said Paco getting to his feet. He yawned, smiling and puffing out his pink cheeks, with his tongue playing between his small, rather boyish teeth.

"He's looking around, he can't see us. In a moment he'll whistle 'Here doggie.' We'd better show ourselves." They marched towards him.

"We didn't find the sacristan but we've done the church," said Maria. "What else have you?"

"Not much," said Citrón, "just the sights. There's the museum, if you like."

"Is there any more to see in your own town, *Veracruzana?*" said the General. "You expect too much."

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They descended to the Zócalo and strolled around among the kneeling pottery and straw sellers stopping often to bargain and laugh. They bought a few trifles, shiny little pots of Michoacan and a straw horseman such as tourists buy. At the gates of the museum they loitered undecided and contented themselves finally with a look at the patio, its memorial stones and greenery, and returned to the square.

"So much for *el Jefe's* behavior to that point," Citron said ending the silence he had kept since leaving the church. "What do you think of it, eh?" He did not stop for an answer. "You know it has made me think of this, you cannot expect a man to correct in a crisis the faults he had before. He cannot know them all himself. But you can condemn him for not even *suspecting* himself. *El Jefe* did not and does not. I can tell. He was in no way uneasy. Well, it may be a necessary thing in a public man not to suspect himself but I don't care for it and so far as I'm concerned that's what's wrong with all these people. You would think that being 'history-minded' would make them more conscientious, but it doesn't. And people like me who are carried along and not being in major positions have an opportunity to look into the works, we are struck by a lack of fitness that throws suspicion on everything and makes us sure there must have been precisely such vanities and blunders in the greatest Passions. Although it would be cheap to discredit them for that. But you see, I was upset; you wouldn't think anyone so case hardened would be."

"*Como no?* The toughest are, once in a while. It happens to me."

"Well, I was. And it was what happened afterwards as much as anything else that did it. You can never get used to some things entirely, can you? To be fair, however, the fault was not entirely Felipe's but also the doctors' and the press's. It can be that living a year in the States has made me squeamish. I don't know. But there they make some attempt to conceal the *tripas*. It may not always be so honest and it may not always work, but once you get the object it makes life a little easier. But here we spill them all over and hang them up with lungs, windpipe, kidneys, fat, bones and all in the open market, and I have seen men disembowel each other as though they were no more than hens or cocks."

"Don't they do that up there?" said Paco.

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"I suppose so, but not in such a medieval spirit."

"What's the difference, as long as they do it? We at least have abolished capital punishment."

"That is so, isn't it?" said Citrón, partly surprised, partly contemptuous. "But what I have observed is true nevertheless. Now take this case. After they had exhibited the old man in the rooms at Tacuba 4 a few hours they held a post mortem and let the crowds in of medical students, the press and the just curious. It was a scandal. The photographers had them turn him every way like a slab of beef and shunted him around so that when the pictures came out Felipe got several reprimanding calls from the cabinet. The curio hunters would have got his heart if we had let them. But, as I said, he couldn't entirely help it although he could have toned it down somewhat by keeping out the crowd.

"But where he did come out badly (badly where I'm concerned) was in the ceremonies. Paco, he didn't miss one. He went to all of them in uniform until I got tired of seeing him and stopped buying the paper because it was just insufferable. What's more he took to appearing always next to the old woman and that *was* hard because, well, because it was overdoing it. I think he was giving way to his relief at not being responsible and that's what disgusted me. Now if they had killed the old man through the same sort of attack they tried the first time Felipe would have been to blame. However, it had been done from the inside and was unavoidable and Felipe saw his advantage at once. He had been worried about it, I know that. But here, how could anyone complain about him. He simply made the most of it and for three days did nothing but sit on platforms and tell us where to put the wreaths and help the *viuda* up and down stairs."

"Until . . ."

"Until he tired himself out so he had to have a rest," said Citrón.

"*Ya lo creo*," replied Paco.

The General signalled them to halt at the car and they drove back to the hotel.

"I am so tired," complained Eulalia. "Those stones hurt my feet."

"You'll feel better after a bath," said Gloria. "But you'd better take one right away. The sign says there is no hot water after eight o'clock in the evening."

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There was a dike of clouds settling low on the raw mountainside, holding back the unglowing red upper pile from the green daubed lower hills. They saw coming toward them the dim print of the day's first rain. The noisy streams thrust through the soft drift deeper than before and they brought with them tree limbs, corn stalks and bristling plates of pear-cactus.

At the hotel the rooms were cold. The General called for electric heaters in his and the girls' rooms. Paco and Citrón went to the game room where there was a fire and smoked and played several games of *damas chinas*. Citrón lost every one.

"Your mind isn't on the game, *hombre*," Paco grinned. "You can't win at *damas chinas* if you wander. What are you thinking about, still that same business. It's over with, why not forget it? Now if one of those little blonde *gringas* were here I could understand your losing."

"You're right," said Citrón. "And perhaps we ought to get in a little rest before supper. They may decide they want to see *Rosa de Xochimilco* afterwards or run over to Morelia to spend all hours in the bar of that place where we had breakfast this morning."

"I'm ready; come on," said Paco.

In their room they took off their coats and shoes and crawled under the blankets. "It gets so cold here towards night in the rainy season," said Paco.

"Shsh! Do you hear that?"

"What?" Paco whispered.

"Just listen."

The General tapped once, twice, three times at the girls' wall adjoining and called in a low voice.

"I wonder who'll come," whispered Paco. Now the General seemed to be listening. "Who will it be, can you guess?"

"Gloria? Eulalia? I don't know. Perhaps we can tell if we watch during dinner."

"No, do you think so?"

They listened to the soft steps at the General's door; it opened, closed, and they remained upright in their beds, smiling at each other through the gathering darkness.

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Swann and Hamlet: A note on the Contemporary Hero

Wallace Fowlie

THE TRAGIC HERO has deserted tragedy and crept into the novel. His destiny has discovered here more space for his action and for his suffering. (Always, tragedy has been prepared by the world making itself felt in the virtue and vice of a solitary man.) More elaborately than any other literary artist, Marcel Proust prepared the setting for tragedy and the actors who seemed destined to portray tragedy. But this longest preparation in art never ceased being just that. Proust contemplated tragedy throughout the composition of his thousands of pages; he never lived it.

The heroes of Proust, because of their unreciprocated love, are, more than other heroes in literature, the great solitary ones. Like a violently lighted room, each hero—Swann, Charlus, Marcel —absorbs in himself a world of cruel light, and the rest of the house, the other beings (and the other décors) disappear in darkness.

The jealousy of Swann for Odette is a shadow which follows his love everywhere. Odette is the mistress under suspicion when she is absent, when she is present, even when perhaps she is no longer loved. Swann caresses and cradles all the insignificant words of Odette and also all those which she never uttered. The joy of Swann of which he is surest is his cohabitation with the absent Odette. There he is all-powerful and his very jealousy can change into voluptuousness. Surrounded by friends or alone, he thinks of her and this thought leaps on to his knees and cuddles down "comme une bête aimée qu'on emmène partout et qu'il garderait avec lui, à table, à l'insu des convives."

Swann is the hero who loves. But the classical hero usually is the one who is loved. Hamlet, for example. Hamlet represents the type of hero who is jealous of his fate as a man and not of his fate as a lover. Rodrigue also. Even Othello, blindest of them all, knows constantly that he is loved by Desdemona. But Swann,

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antithesis of the classical hero, no longer feels the world living around him. He is the world itself before which he must make his mistress kneel down. Hamlet, before he can enjoy his love (which remains intact throughout the duration of the work), must make the world kneel down before his human pride. It is true that Hamlet's action in the world is clear: revenge for murder and revindication of maternal love. Swann's action in the world is diffuse. It is not a world he inhabits, it is a worldliness. Hamlet breathes deeply while he raises a man up to the measurement of tragedy. The prince becomes a hero because he surpasses himself and because he explores a mystery exterior to himself. Swann stifles and sobs in his effort to diminish a tragedy in order to meet the measurement of a man. The one mystery in his life is his own heart.

If the heart of Swann vows to Odette a sentiment of veneration, his intelligence—however lucid it may be in most details—is unable to comprehend the principal fact that Odette is a "cocotte." Swann knows it, but he refuses to know the action of this fact on his life. We see Swann, throughout the long novel of Proust and especially in the first part, only when his nature is attenuated. He demands that Odette pay him the homage of admiration and gratitude, knowing all the time that she is forever incapable of seizing the complexity of his tastes and his tenderness. However, the studious life of an artist which Swann has always led, discovers its true function in his love. The woman, at the moments when she is the most loved, remains indifferent and cold like an object of art, but makes suffer and exist the sensibility of her lover which until then had been meticulously prepared to suffer and exist. The lover is no longer the man. His nature is changed, because suddenly it has found itself attached to a new experience. And Swann does not dominate this experience as he had always dominated aesthetic experiences, he undergoes it.

The theory of love developed by Swann appears precisely the opposite of the one dear to the Provençal poets and Dante. For these, the mistress symbolizes the light of truth. Love is the new faculty susceptible of leading the lover toward all the perfections, toward God Himself. Swann also considers love an intellectual pleasure, but the object of his love remains exclusively a woman and never becomes a symbol of virtue. The light of truth flows

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from Beatrice, but the light of truth which Swann seeks (and the formula is in Proust), is that which concerns the actions, the projects and the past of Odette. The world of Beatrice, apogee of Dante's voyage, is Paradise. The world of Ophelia is that purity of which Hamlet must make himself worthy before contemplating it. The world of Odette, composed of places vaguely known by Swann but which he would like to explore in order to suffer there, is the demi-monde of facile fidelities. From a purely psychological viewpoint, Swann is the intellectual and Odette is the instinctive type. Proust the artist is curious to study and understand a temperament opposed to his own which is capable of living immediately in the world and enjoying the moment. Swann is the initial representation of Marcel, whose drama is not essentially that of love. It is the drama which recaptures certain moments when love had been apprehended sensuously and when, by that very fact, the tragedy and dissolution of such a love became as real as the experience which was being lived. The future for Hamlet remains always the future, and his tragedy occurs at the end of the play. But in the episode, "Un Amour de Swann," the future is constantly becoming the past, because the tragedy is known, accepted and experienced throughout the inner action of Swann's self-analysis. In Shakespeare, a character gradually develops into the hero and at the end, assumes the burden of the tragedy. In Proust, the hero makes countless efforts to diminish his stature into that of a man and thus to live and to feel like a man. He is tragic at the outset and tries to disburden himself of that honor.

Pride is the constant and implacable corollary of love for Swann. In his agitation, which at times resembles almost a kind of witchcraft dance, (the night wanderings of Swann have a curious magical glow about them) his taste becomes increasingly exclusive. A taste dedicated to one principle. The taste of a witch doctor, a priest, a hierophant. The need to possess Odette is the rite of this religion. And, as in all religions which remain active, this need is insensate and profound. Swann's taste, which in our analogy becomes a kind of religious doctrine unaffected by time, represents his point of honor, his "glory" as the seventeenth century would have called it. So imperious is this taste—because, of course, all his life had been dedicated to its development and fulfillment—that when he knows it cannot be satisfied;—that is, in looking for

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Odette one night,—he continues a futile search because it would be cruel to renounce the search.

Odette incarnates Swann's love for beauty and his pride is wounded because he knows that Odette's particular beauty will not last. "L'amour a tellement besoin de se trouver une garantie de durée." The element of pride in Swann's love grows to such proportions that it ends by taking on a kind of responsibility. It ends by remaining alone. Proust recaptures time by effecting three transformations or three replacements: the hero yields to his pride; the lover yields to his love; the artist yields to his work.

Aschenbach, in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, is a purer type of artist than Swann, but he too is characterized by pride in his reputation and accomplishments. Aschenbach never becomes the prisoner of his pride, as Swann does; he is prisoner of his work. Neither man ever knew the facile liberty of normal living. They are voluptuaries of art. "Art is a heightened mode of existence," we read in the Mann story. Natural voluptuousness for most men is intermittent and passing. For Swann and Aschenbach, voluptuousness is an everlasting jailer. The pride of the connoisseur is the love of the most faithful lover imaginable. He is the lover who will forever see himself and his particular apprehension of beauty in his past love or in any new depiction of it: Aschenbach watching Tadzio on the beach, and Swann looking at Odette in the salon of Mme. Verdurin.

For Swann, then, love is the product of his taste in art, behind which and before which stretches indomitably the connoisseur's pride. His love is never pure because of this rich ingredient of pride and because of his particular form of suffering. This suffering, born from jealousy, seems to emerge from Swann's lack of knowledge about Odette. He would cease suffering if he could know all.

It is true that Proust is no metaphysician. He is an artist. But his hero's problem is epistemological in nature. The studious life of Swann had taught him that the search of the connoisseur is the search for facts. This habit he maintains in his rôle of lover. The search of the lover is the search for facts. And now the derisive tragedy becomes clearer. Whereas the facts about a painting are stable, those which concern human beings and human life are changing facts often shrouded in incomprehensible mystery.

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Swann is predestined to suffering by his temperament and by the too neat transformation he undergoes from aesthete into lover.

There is an interesting resemblance between Swann and the Provençal poets (and those of the *dolce stil nuovo*) in the distance they feel exists between them and the object loved. But with the poets of the south, this distance is suitable to the tone of worship in their love. They worship the impeccable woman, the spiritual mistress. Not only is Swann's world naturally remote from Odette's, but he increases the separation by the morbidity of his imaginings. Daily he invents evil designs to explain Odette's conduct. In this evolution of the hero-lover, the sick man should be raised to health by love. This is Dante's testimonial, and Cavalcanti's. But in Proust's work the artist is overcome by a peculiar suffering which is a malady. Swann frankly faces the nature of this malady, when he realizes that to cease being suspicious of Odette, would be to cease loving her. Swann accepts the impossibility of any cure. His is the cherished malady. To be cured would be to die.

Hamlet seeks knowledge which will permit him to act. But Swann, refusing to act and thereby cause his spell to vanish, invents false facts in order to maintain his fever. The modern hero in literature seems to be characterized by his search and effort to adjust the world to the facts of his imagination. Thus, the modern hero represents, to an extraordinary degree, a case of infantilism. He is a child, not because of his innocency, but by his reconstruction of a distorted world. Hamlet, the type of classical hero, strives in the opposite direction. His action is not self-protective and remote from reality. It is a piercing of all that has obscured his mind from the understanding of reality. To live, for Hamlet, becomes equivalent to leaving his books, his childhood, his traditions, and testing their maturing power on what the world inevitably provides of deceit, lust, mercy. Hamlet goes into a world he doesn't know, where he will have to readjust his vision and his strength. Shakespeare's art is the art of the world to be conquered.

Proust's art is the art of the world to be remembered. Swann is the hero when he remembers, thanks to the sound of music, the figure of Odette flanked by the Verdurins and the Cottards. His world is reenacted by a violent and subversive memory, the richest perhaps in all literature. But the hero condenses the world into a

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salon and the salon into his fever. This he will not leave, because there is nothing outside of it. Neither will Aschenbach leave Venice. Fever-infested Venice is the symbol in Mann's story for the world of the modern hero who seeks his death, willfully, in all that is unreal to himself. "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" is no modern ejaculation.

The mind of the hero has become the mind of the artist, who, having learned the strange power that can be exerted over all that he creates, has been confounded by the power which the real world seeks to exert over him. To escape this dilemma, which is simple and habitual, he has constructed a more complicated one in his effort to consider the world, an art, and human struggle in the world, the artistic creation.

As Swann listens to the brief recurring theme in Vinteuil's sonata, with which he has come to associate his love for Odette, he feels the proportions of his soul change. In himself the hero has learned how to liberate a space necessary for the action and the movement of his memory. In contradiction with the hero who is forced to compose his action in the present-invading-future, Swann is the hero of the present-invading-past. The world enters into him as if it had no more consistency than the sounds of Vinteuil's music have in the air. The world is malleable. It is subtilized by some lyric chemistry, even as the will of the hero has subtilized evil.

Later in the work, there is another metaphor, another delicate notation concerning the musical motifs in Vinteuil's sonata. The motifs become for Swann ideas which fill the great unpenetrated night of his soul ("qui remplissent la grande nuit impénétrée de son âme"). This is an extraordinary adjective, *impénétrée,* which bears in it the paradox of Proust's entire novel, and more particularly, the paradox of Swann's love. Proust is saying that musical motifs, like ideas, are *filling* the soul of his hero which is *unpenetrated.* This seems to be equivalent to saying that the hero is filling his memory with the unreal furnishings of memory. The active hero usually heeds a contrary supplication: the great necessity for the soul to empty itself and thereby to face the present and to prepare the future.

This paradox of metaphor leads us back to the paradox of morals. Soon after Proust completes the image of Swann's 'love

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being a malady' by having his hero say that his love cannot be operated on ("son mal n'est plus opérable"), Swann realizes that Odette's real sentiment of love for him is over. He continues, however, to listen to Vinteuil's music which is endowed for him more and more with a supernatural prestige. He enters the final phase of his love, when absolute immobility of his being is required for the recapture of his love—that is, for the perfect hearing of musical themes which have assumed the sentiment of his love.

Swann becomes finally, then, the lover of beauty who is unable to possess it. As Aschenbach is the creator of beauty who is unable to possess it. Both, through this incapacity to possess what they love, stand for a new type of hero. Swann is the modern hero whose action has become contemplation. Odette is in reality no woman at all for Swann; she is a painting of Botticelli. Likewise, Tadzio, in the rich and poignant imagination of Aschenbach, is the smile of Narcissus.

One of the great moments in Hamlet's struggle is when he makes this extraordinary request of his mother: "Forgive me this my virtue." Hamlet is the innocent who wills the action of virtue and whose tragedy occurs when the power opposed to virtue prevails. Today, in Swann and Aschenbach for example, the hero has reversed this extraordinary request of a son to his mother, and utters its equally extraordinary opposite: "Grant me this my vice." This request the modern hero doesn't make to his mother (who in Hamlet's case represented the hero's world), but he makes it to himself!

The old adage of Socrates, "Know thyself," is certainly at the core of every heroic deed and of every effort toward the achievement of heroism. But today, the heroism of knowing oneself has become the heroism of not knowing oneself, or rather the heroism of flight from all that is central in oneself. The modern hero's heart is the heart fluctuating. Proust's phrase, "les intermittences du coeur," which he at one time destined for the general title of his work, is the key phrase for modern psychology. And psychologism, I fully believe, will characterize our age (if anything remains after the wars of our age) as humanism characterizes the Renaissance and as scholasticism characterizes the Middle Ages.

The "intermittences of the heart" is the phrase in which converge the profoundest meanings of romanticism and scepticism.

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Romanticism is the study of the self that is not central in man; I am almost prepared to say that it is the study of the non-existent self. (The so-called romanticism of Corneille's *Cid* is not the romanticism of Marcel Proust's novel.) Scepticism is the belief that a man is equally composed of a positive self and a negative one. With this belief, the self never really is; it is always becoming.

Out of a romanticism of valor and love striving to harmonize with the world and thereby purify it,—that is, out of the romanticism of *Le Cid* and *Hamlet*, has been forged the romanticism of self-analysis and self-pity. Out of the scepticism of the Renaissance, that is, the scepticism of Montaigne and Hamlet, which was doubt arising from an absence of facts and a wonderment over the meaning of an isolated fact and its mobile meaning arising from its juxtaposition with other facts, has grown the modern scepticism concerning truth and values.

Tragedy does not arise from the intermittences of a hero's heart. It arises from the hero's pact made with the world; a pact that is unremitting and sealed. Tragedy follows contemplation because tragedy is a commitment. (In contemplation there is no need for commitment.) Proust's hero contemplates the world of his sensitivity and signs no pact with any other world. He knows all the dangerous freedom of intermittences and ignores the danger of a willed subservience. Swann does not live in alliance with his destiny. He lives in the dissolution of all his moral prejudices and he seeks no escape from this empty state. He is the contemplator of infecundity and the modern hero of inaction.

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As to Values and Facts: An Exchange

I. Max Eastman to James T. Farrell

Dear Jim:

The paragraph in PARTISAN REVIEW for January-February in which you dismiss me as a Philistine seems to have more than a personal significance. I'd like to discuss it with you. It is a continuation of Dwight Macdonald's similarly offhand remark in the previous number that my essay on *Socialism and Human Nature*, which he considers "downright silly," is part of a general "swing back to bourgeois values." I think you both adopt this papal tone because you dare not confront my arguments. More accurately, you dare not confront your own knowledge of the facts.

There has been no change of values. Louis Corey, Louis Hacker, Sidney Hook, John Dos Passos, James Burnham—the ones Macdonald names—Alexander Barmine, Boris Souvarine, Max Nomad, to name three more—what evidence is there that any one of these men has lost his devotion to the cause of the exploited and the ideal of a democracy that shall be more than political? What evidence that any of them lives a different life—eats, works, sleeps, writes, speaks, amuses himself, spends his money differently?

Alexander Barmine has well summed up, for brief quotation, what is in the minds of all of them:

> During the years since the Moscow trials of 1936-38 I have spent many days and many sleepless nights thinking deeply about the whole problem of our Russian revolution. I have tried my best to see clearly to what result, after all these years of effort and sacrifice, it has arrived.
>
> Our idea of socialism rested upon two major assmuptions: that under a collectivized economy production would rise very much higher than it can under capitalism; and that the exploited wage workers would get the main benefit of this increased production—until in the long run, exploitation should cease. The Soviet economic system together with Stalin's totalitarian political regime have disproven both these assumptions. . . .
>
> The collective ownership of the machinery has been a failure, and the working class, instead of gaining, has paid in increased misery for this failure. . . . Private property in the means of production is not a necessary basis for the exploitation of a man by man—Stalin at least has taught us that!

Where is the change of values?

When I first took my political position in the old *Masses*, I described it (April 1913) as "scientific idealism." In an editorial of March 1914, I spoke of "the spirit of experimental science" as "the only new thing among us," and explicitly disassociated myself from those to whom revolution means "a love of the flavor of ideas of revolt, rather than a con-

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centration of interest either on an end to be achieved, or on ideas as working hypotheses for its achievement." In the *Liberator* for November 1920, I wrote: "While there may be debate as to whether the Marxian hypothesis in its general outlines has yet been proven or not—anyone who says it has been disproven by the events of the last five years is either ignorant of the hypothesis, or ignorant of the last five years." In the recent article on *Socialism and Human Nature*, I asserted that by the events of the last twenty years the hypothesis has been disproven.

> "To honest men with courage to face facts it is clear that Lenin's experiment, like Robert Owen's failed. . . . An honest, bold, noble, and within its limits extremely high-brow attempt to produce through common ownership a Society of the Free and Equal, produced a tyrant and a totaltarian state; there sprung up in its wake, borrowing its name and imitating its political procedures, other tyrants and totalitarian states; the whole world was plunged into war. I think any wise socialist, viewing this sequence in the light of what we know that Lenin did not about human nature, little though it is, will be inclined to reconsider his assumptions. In his further efforts toward a world in which science shall have conquered poverty and superstition, and made a rich life possible to all, he will be cautious about the scheme of common ownership and state control. He will be cautious about the *extent* to which it may be carried. The more 'radical' he is—in the sense of intelligently caring about liberty and justice and a chance at life for the wage workers—the more cautious he will be."
>
> Where is the change of values?

Nobody in his right mind, from Marx down, ever denied that bourgeois democracy has values. To expand those values, and make them more genuine and more universal, has been the aim of all socialists, both revolutionary and reformist. We who have our eyes open today, see that those values are not going to be expanded, but destroyed, by a transfer of all power and industry to a revolutionary state, whether it calls itself proletarian or fascist. We see that in this period those values are on the defensive. Civilization itself is on the defensive. In proceeding toward new values we must guard the positions already won. That is what is in our minds. It is a confrontation of facts, not a change of values.

The real difference between us and you, in my opinion, is this: In a period when certain means we had all agreed upon for emancipating the working class and therewith all society, have proven to lead in the opposite direction, we have remained loyal to the aim, you to the means. We care enough, and objectively enough, about the cause of the workers and about human freedom, to reorganize our emotions, readjust our conceptions, sacrifice what we must of our prestige, sacrifice the glamour even of our self-esteem, in order in the new conditions, and in the light of the new knowledge gained, still to defend them. You do not care that much about the workers or about human freedom. You care more about your

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own emotional and intellectual life which had been organized around the means.

That is the only way I can explain the fantastic inventions with which some of you justify yourselves in continuing the struggle on the old terms. The notion put forward in Macdonald's and Greenberg's "Ten Propositions on the War," that the working class can take over all power and productive property in America during the war by a "mass revolution," and nevertheless without "especially violent struggle" and with "political democracy" in the outcome, has about as much to do with the realities around us as a virgin birth of Christ made blissful by the twilight sleep. It is on a par with Jim Cannon's recent discovery that a victorious revolution of the kind envisaged by Leon Trotsky will in the United States "with absolute certainty" affirm freedom of speech, press, assembly, and religion. (Poor Trotsky!) The revival in *Modern Socialism* of De Leon's idea of a revolutionary party which will abdicate in favor of the working class economic organs after the power is seized, has the same pathos. Who or what is going to make it abdicate? The Ghost of Daniel De Leon?

Under present conditions, any one of these proposals, if taken seriously in action, would lead straight into the totalitarian tyranny. They serve only to protect you in a familiar state of mind and feeling.

Not much more than a year ago, Jim, you remarked to me that a dictatorial party would inevitably seize the power in any revolutionary upheaval. In a subsequent conversation on the same theme, you said: "It makes one hesitate to summon the workers to revolution." These were momentary remarks and of course not binding upon you, but they indicate what things you had to shut your eyes to before emerging with this bland excommunication of me as a Philistine. It is the first time I have been called a Philistine by a member of the National Academy, and at the risk of seeming immodest I am going to dwell upon it a little. You accomplish my excommunication with six edicts or annunciations.

1. "The Philistines are coming together."

By this dictum you associate me with the moralistic and valetudinarian aesthetic of Van Wyck Brooks and his recent reactionary attack on science and literary adventure—an attitude to the refutation of which I have devoted no less than six books. Since Brooks attacks me with acid in the very book in which his discourse was printed, the assertion that we are "coming together" would seem, in ordinary conscience, to demand proof. Your proof is that Macdonald brought our names into the same list in a similarly casual obiter dictum about a "swing back to bourgeois values" in the article you are discussing.

2. These Philistines who are coming together "wail for a Weltanschauung." "They are disturbed because they do not see sufficient faith in their fellow men. Max Eastman declares that his contemporaries lack faith in democracy."

Aside from the arbitrary linking of my name with that of Van Wyck Brooks, your sole ground for the assertion that I wail for a Weltan-

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schauung is this passage in my leaflet arguing the necessity of war on Hitler:

"The discoverers of the historic law according to which democracy turns into fascism in the very act of fighting it have not found knowledge but lost faith. They have lost faith in democracy. They do not think themselves in it and of it, making it survive, making it expand after the victory."

Democracy here is not a Weltanschauung but an existing thing, a political system and system of social habits, in whose survival and expansion, by one means or another, as I said, all socialists have always believed. You grab the word "faith" out of this context, and pretend I have turned against my own life-attitude, which, as you well know, is one of scientific scepticism.

3. "They are looking for some soul-saving hope which will not require them to meet problems patiently, with discipline and with courage. They want a faith that will save them the onerous difficulties of thinking.

Honestly, Jim . . . if you have been doing more thinking in recent years than the rest of us, what have you done with your thoughts? Where are they? And what are they? A dribble of book reviews and letters of protest to Stalinoid editors, an occasional comment on other people's opinions published in PARTISAN REVIEW. Is that the evidence of disciplined thinking?

4. "I observe for instance, that when Eastman criticizes dialectical materialism, he seems to be more disturbed because it seems to him to be a fighting faith, than he is because it is an inadequate statement of scientific method, and an unwarranted description of nature."

Just where and when did you make this observation, and what is there in my books and writings to support it? In Part VII of *Marxism, Is It Science?* I expounded six merits possessed by the scientific as against the religious or metaphysical attitude, the attitude of the *Weltanschauung*, all of them from the point of view of getting on with the struggle towards working class liberation and a more free and equal society. While you were meeting so courageously and patiently and with so much discipline, the onerous difficulties of thinking, wouldn't it have been appropriate to think a little about that chapter before pontificating about my motives in opposing the dialectical buncombe?

5. "What these men are really trying to do is to create a metaphysics of the war."

My statement on the war published as a letter to the New York *Times*, and then a leaflet by the Rand Bookshop, is only thirteen pages long. It would not take a vast patience or an egregious amount of discipline to read it through. It is all I have written on that subject. There is not a glimmer of metaphysics, or of effort to create a metaphysics, in it. My reasons for thinking radicals must fight Hitler are entirely matter-of-fact and practical, and they are extremely serious. Why not meet them with facts and logic, if you do not agree with them?

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6. "But they do not pursue the task systematically, and with a real intent to tackle the problem which it poses for them. . . . Eastman discusses the beard of Karl Marx. . . . These men render trivial the discussions and controversies which rage over the most serious problems which the human race faces in this era."

As a psychological novelist, and a real person, you know quite well that if my remark about Marx's beard was in momentary bad taste, the sole reason is my impatience of idolatry and too great fondness for a smile. The picture of a man who broaches the long postponed question of the relation between socialist theory and the sciences of human behavior employing an allusion to Marx's beard in order to render his own discussion trivial, has no relation either to me, or to any other conceivable reality. It is all a part of the new art, so highly developed in Moscow, of hocus pocus vilification.

Your making an amalgam of Van Wyck Brooks and me, and falsifying my whole literary and political life-attitude on the basis of that trick and these gross inventions, has the supreme merit, from my point of view, that it does not end in the death-sentence. Otherwise it is both morally and intellectually on a level with the Moscow trials.

And that, I beg to warn you, is where you are coming out, if you persist in dodging your own inmost thoughts—divorcing your public opinions from your private sense of reality. You are coming out in a little gang of sectarian bigots, pretending to esoteric insight but in reality hiding behind ideas from facts, dismissing for that reason as apostates, dismissing without honorable debate—and in the long run, if you get the power, executing without trial (it is the same thing writ large)—those who appeal against your sacred dogmas to living fact and reason. You can not oppose totalitarianism and cling to the systems of thought and action that directly and unquestionably lead to it. If you are going to discuss real programs with real people you have got to make a choice.

A new radical movement must inevitably take form in this country, based on a straight-out recognition that Marxism is unscientific and complete collectivism a failure, a movement that will find its theoretical guidance in all the anthropological sciences, not just economics, and which will oppose with arrogance the morbid and monstrous overgrowth of the state. You ought to have a place in it. You don't belong with the near-sighted cranks and cross-patches, the wounded veterans of an exploded theology.

Yours sincerely,

MAX EASTMAN

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2. Reply by Mr. Farrell

Sirs:

Partly because I characterized him as a Philistine, Max Eastman is fearful lest I some day execute him without trial. He seems to believe that I am capable of becoming such a moral monster, and such a fool, that I might one day want to shoot people for the "crime" of "Philistinism"—in other words that I might in the future desire practically to depopulate the globe. He also accuses me of concocting amalgams. But it seems to me that Eastman himself, in his letter, has forged a double amalgam. The first one is a self-amalgam, apparently calculated to bolster his own position and prestige. With or without authority, he names himself spokesman for the following intellectuals—Lewis Corey, Louis Hacker, Sidney Hook, John Dos Passos, James Burnham, Alexander Barmine, Boris Souvarine and Max Nomad. He presents himself and these men as a group devoted "to the cause of the exploited and the ideal of democracy." His second amalgam consists of the editors of PARTISAN REVIEW, myself, and others un-named, presumably both wings of the Trotskyist movement. My group is a "little gang of sectarian bigots" which cares nothing for the workers or for human freedom: we are merely interested in our own ideas and emotions. Thanks to these amalgams, Eastman permits himself to establish himself as a democrat who is fighting totalitarianism. He can thereby turn his answer to my criticism of him into a defense of democracy. Forcing the issues into this framework is ridiculous on its face. The men whom Eastman lists form no cohesive group. Among them, there are serious disagreements which are basic in character. Some of these men, for instance Louis Hacker and James Burnham, have attacked each other most sharply. It is even doubtful whether or not some members of this group would even say hello to one another. And neither is my "little gang of sectarian bigots" a gang or a group. It is well known to readers of this magazine that the editorial board of PARTISAN REVIEW is split on the war question. One of the editors, Philip Rahv, is decidedly more in agreement with Max Eastman on the war than he is with either Dwight Macdonald or myself. While Macdonald and I are in agreement concerning the proposition that socialism is the only solution to the problems posed by contemporary society, we do not agree on the character of fascist economy. The Trotskyist movement is split, and both wings of it attack PARTISAN REVIEW. Finally, I bear no responsibility in the editing of this magazine, and I speak only for myself. Nonetheless, Eastman turns us all into a group which wants, practically, to take power, establish totalitarianism, and even to murder him.

Max Eastman once defended the basic programme of socialism: he no longer does. In the past, his criticism of Marxism was methodological. He criticized Marxism with the expressed aim of freeing it from the influence of German metaphysics and thereby, of giving it a more grounded scientific validity. He now criticizes Marxism in order to save the human

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race from the terrible dangers that this insidious and false "religion" may cause it. In particular, he makes a frontal attack on the basic proposal in the Marxist programme—the demand that the means of production be socially owned. And he asks me where he has changed his values. Despite the quotations from past writings which he has cited, he can easily answer this question by a careful study of the "life-work" of a man named Eastman.

At the present time, when he frames the issue of socialism, he answers his question by asking it. *In Socialism and Human Nature*, he wrote: "To honest men with courage to face facts it is clear that Lenin's experiment . . . failed." Thus, if one disagrees with him, one is fearful of the facts, dishonest, or both. Part of his "facts" is the conclusion that, because the Russian Revolution degenerated, the entire socialist programme must be abandoned. In other words, he assumes that Russia furnished an adequate historical testing ground for proving or disproving the validity of socialism. He does not prove this assumption: he asserts it. If he is correct, then the same argument can be made to demonstrate that democracy has failed. Ever since the first World War, the curve of liberty in the world has been declining. Democracy has lost out in one country after another. There was a form of political democracy in Italy: fascism triumphed. The Weimar Constitution used to be described as the most democratic one in history. Hitler rose to power, and destroyed political democracy in Germany. Further, his argument can be applied retroactively to demonstrate that democracy also failed in France in the nineteenth century. Did not both Napoleons rise on the ashes of democratic republics? If one revolution, carried out in a backward and war-weary country, is a test of the validity of socialism, why is more than a century of historic experiences not a sufficient test for the theories of political democracy? The logic of Eastman's position leads him away from both democracy and socialism.

What reasons does he offer now to explain this failure of Marxism? According to him, Marxism is a religion, derived from a German metaphysician named Hegel. Thanks to Hegel, Marxism became theological, and this theology blinded it to the facts of human nature. Marxists did not understand psychology. In order to establish this interpretation, he appeals to what he calls scientific psychology. On examination, this turns out to be largely the worn-out stuff I read long ago in my college text books, mainly that of MacDougal. Eastman declares that the major Marxists did not understand the doctrines which were formulated in the instinct school of psychology. Man is born with definite instincts, which influence his future conduct in a fairly definite and precise manner. And because they do, there is an instinctive basis in human nature which makes it impossible ever to establish a socialist society. In particular, man's instincts make it impossible to eliminate private property. And in our times, we must understand that private property is more than mere personal belongings: this is the era of monopoly capitalism. Science, sad to say, has not decisively proven Max Eastman's scientific psychology. Before Eastman

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can make this view stick, he must disprove a whole library of psychological and anthropological literature, much of it based on strict scientific investigations. Among others, he must disprove the work of Pavlov, of C. Judson Herrick (*The Brains of Rats and Men*), Dr. Paul Schilder (*The Idea and Appearance of the Body Image*), Freud, and the social psychology of such American pragmatists as John Dewey and the late George Herbert Mead. And in passing, I might add there are footnotes in the first volume of Marx's *Capital* which anticipate and imply Mead's ideas of the social basis of personality. While Karl Marx never anticipated MacDougal, he did anticipate the work of many contemporary psychologists, social psychologists, social workers and others who seriously study the phenomenon of alienation in our society.

Politically, Eastman's human nature is one of the stalest of all the arguments which reaction invariably throws in the face of every radical tendency which in any way threatens the *status quo*. The human nature argument has been dredged from the drainage canals of history. Just as it is now argued that human nature contravenes the principles of socialism, so was it once claimed that human nature contradicted the principles of democracy. The counter-revolutionary thinkers (against democracy) of the nineteenth century in fact wrote that democracy could not succeed because it was against human nature. One of the historical origins of this argument is the doctrine of original sin, as James Burnham, in his Trotskyist days, convincingly demonstrated in his withering analysis of Max Eastman's science. (*New International*, June, 1938.) He also pointed out that Eastman, with his human nature, was really dragging political discussion back to the level of the middle ages, and trying to force us to consider contemporary problems by way of a discussion of the medieval conception of being.

Max Eastman now writes a lot on what Lenin did not know about human nature. There was a time when Eastman had a different appreciation of Lenin's psychological insight. In *Leon Trotsky: The Portrait of a Youth*, written in 1925, he wrote that Lenin's "great fundamental contribution to the science of revolution . . . was a psychological" one: it was the distinction between a Bolshevik and a Menshevik. In 1940, his *Marxism: Is It Science* told us that Lenin was so blinded by the Marxist theology that he lacked psychological insight, and so failed to win over the anarchists and the social revolutionaries. It has taken Eastman a long time to discover that Lenin failed to understand human nature. In 1925, as in 1940, as in 1942, Max Eastman's adversaries always suffer from the same disease—fixed ideas. These fixed ideas are connected with idealistic philosophy. The facts naturally refute such ideas. And the facts are always on the side of Max Eastman. And he who is unfortunate enough to disagree with Max Eastman always becomes a hypocrite, a man blinded by superstition, a totalitarian, a bigot, a dishonest man lacking the courage to face reality. Eastman writes about these problems with all the charm and culture, the *savoir faire*, the scientific scepticism of a village atheist. It is on the basis of such reasoning that he invites me to attack

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the principles of socialism at a time when these are under violent assault from reactionary quarters. I must decline the invitation.

Eastman presents himself against me as the champion of democracy, and he declares that he has defined democracy as a "political system, and a system of social habits." First of all, while Eastman now cheers for democracy as much as he does for science, it must be observed that his trend of thinking is far from democratic. For years, he has, in a muddled-headed way, been trying to develop some idea of the social engineer who will furnish the proper blueprints for the proper organization of society. If this means anything, it means that he has been developing a conception of the elite. He appeals always to the social engineer of the future, and never to the masses of the people of the present. Aside from the social engineers, his practical proposals are the usual stuff that one reads concerning science and politics in countless dreary books written by second rate professors. You get the same stuff done with more expertness in such books as Dr. Charles E. Merriam's *New Aspects of Politics*. Science in such writings generally plays the role of concealing those factors in a capitalist democracy which militate against the extension of democracy itself—the basic conflicts and contradictions in our society. It is because of the incompatibility of capitalism and democracy that I have placed my faith in socialism.

It seems to me rather ironical that Eastman should solidarize himself, in his Open Letter, with James Burnham. Although Eastman thereby declares that Burnham is devoted to the ideal of democracy and the cause of the exploited, Burnham disagrees with him. Burnham's book, *The Managerial Revolution*, is a high-falutin' thesis on "the wave of the future." Burnham declares that capitalism is dead, and that socialism is impossible: the society of the future is to be that of "the managerial revolution." Burnham cites Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union as examples of this "managerial revolution": he also describes the New Deal as a primitive form of the same revolution. Is it that Max Eastman has not read this book? Is it or is it not purely accidental that he solidarized himself with Burnham? Does he think that Burnham's book is one of the blue prints which the social engineers of the future will draw upon when they lead the new radical movement which Eastman considers to be inevitable? I do not know the answers to these questions. All I know is that Eastman solidarizes himself with Burnham as a deserving democrat, and opposes Burnham to myself and my "little gang of sectarian bigots."

When Eastman tells us that we have lost faith in democracy, he is using the wrong word: we have long ago lost faith in capitalism. Further, he helps create a metaphysics of the war by his concealment of issues, by his failure to discuss the practical questions involved in the war, particularly the question of war aims. What he calls faith in democracy amounts to a blank check to those who now conduct the war effort. I do not believe in writing blank checks. His letter to *The New York Times* was formal and abstract. Alongside of this letter, the writings of such men as Harold Laski since August 1939 are models of realistic analysis. A platitude about democracy and a statement that his life-attitude has been one of scientific scepticism is, to me, no substitute for a discussion of issues.

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As for his "science," he has never done any scientific work: his discussions of science are utterly inadequate: at best, they are contemporary with the ideas of Francis Bacon. In essence, Eastman is a compound of crude empiricism and shallow rationalism.

Eastman objects to my drawing a parallel between recent writings of his and those of Van Wyck Brooks. And I repeat, I drew a parallel between them, and did not put the two men together in any amalgam. Nor did Macdonald's article make the amalgam Eastman's letter complains about. For a devotee of scientific method, Eastman is extraordinarily careless about his facts: Macdonald's article did indeed describe Eastman (along with Corey, Hacker, Hook and Dos Passos) as expressing "a swing back to bourgeois values"; but Brooks (and Burnham) were quite explicitly put in another category, as exponents of "the other and newer and much more ominous tendency . . . to rally to the concepts of Hitler's (and Stalin's) 'New Order'." I was far from unmindful of Max Eastman's well-known views on art when I described him as a Philistine. In the field of literature, he has been consistently conventional in theory, in taste, and in practice. A number of his literary ideas are too banal to merit discussion. He has been continually unsympathetic to most new work. He has written of literary radicals in the same kind of abusive language that one always finds in the "criticism" of literary Philistines. Eastman's rambunctiously literal-minded attacks on "the cult of unintelligibility" (such writers as James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, E. E. Cummings and Hart Crane) pave the way for the later moralistic abuse which Van Wyck Brooks has poured on these men. Disagreeing with much of Brooks' book, *The Opinions of Oliver Allston*, Eastman nevertheless described Brooks' strictures on modernist writers (*The American Mercury*, March 1942) as "enjoyable insults." He agrees with Brooks, in brief, concerning this kind of writing. Personally, I consider the attacks of both Eastman and Brooks on important modern writers as unworthy of literature. Eastman's Philistinism more and more saturates his writings. I again remark that he wrote that Karl Marx could not earn a living, and that he grew a beard in compensation. In *The Atlantic Monthly* for December, 1941, Eastman wrote an article on John Dewey. One of his major emphases was that Dewey had made "philosophy pay." Here, the facts were on his side: he cited the rising income figures in Dewey's academic life. Writing about America's greatest philosopher, this is one of the main points he stresses. By so doing, he actually reduces pragmatism and instrumentalism to the level on which it has been condemned by its most vulgar critics. I described him as a Philistine because I felt that this is the best word that I could use: if I knew a better one, I should have used it.

Eastman's letter and his recent attacks on Marxism remind me of a sentence in Chekhov's note-books: "You won't become a saint through other people's sins."

JAMES T. FARRELL

April 14, 1942
New York City

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Josephine, The Songstress or, The Mice Nation

Franz Kafka

OUR SINGER is called Josephine. Those who have not heard her sing do not know the power of song. There is no one who is not carried away by her singing; and this is all the more remarkable as our race on the whole is not fond of music. The calm of peace is the best music for us; our lives are hard, and even when we try to dismiss the cares of the day we cannot lift ourselves to a thing so remote from our ordinary lives as music. But we do not complain about this very much, we never go to that extreme; we consider our greatest asset to be a certain practical shrewdness, which we find very necessary indeed, and this shrewdness enables us to smile and so console ourselves for everything, even for missing the joy of music—that is, if we were to desire it, which never happens. Josephine is the only exception; she loves music and also knows how to interpret it; she is the only one, and when she goes, music will disappear from our lives, who knows for how long?

I have often reflected as to just what really is the situation in music. We are completely unmusical, so how does it happen that we can understand Josephine's singing, or at least think we do, for Josephine denies that we understand her. The simplest answer would be that the beauty of her singing is so great that even the dullest sense cannot resist it. But this would not be a satisfactory answer. If this were actually so, we would have had a feeling of the unusual from the very first and always afterwards, a feeling that what we heard in this voice was something that we had never heard before, something we altogether lacked the capacity to hear, and which Josephine alone, and no one else, made us able to hear. But in my opinion, it is exactly this that is not so. I do not feel this, nor have I noticed anything of the sort in others. To our intimates we openly admit that Josephine's singing manifests nothing remarkable as singing in itself.

Is it really singing then? We do have traditions of song, in spite of our unmusical nature; there was singing in the old days

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of our people; sagas tell about it, and songs have even been preserved, which, to tell the truth, no one can sing any more. So we have some notion of what singing is like, and Josephine's art does not actually agree with that notion. Is it really singing then? Maybe it is just squeaking? And at any rate we all know what squeaking is; it is the artistic skill peculiar to our people, or rather no skill at all, but a characteristic manifestation of our life. We all squeak, but no one actually thinks of passing it off as art; we squeak without paying any attention to it, without even noticing it, and in fact many of us are not at all aware that squeaking is one of our characteristic traits. If it is true, therefore, that Josephine does not sing, but just squeaks, and—as it seems to me at least —hardly exceeds the ordinary limits of squeaking, then there still remains to be explained the enigma of her great success, and it is all the more an enigma.

For what she produces is not just simply squeaking. If one stood some distance from her and listened—or better yet, if one were to try it like this—have Josephine sing with other voices, and let the listener set himself the problem of distinguishing hers; without a doubt he would make out nothing more than an ordinary squeaking, a bit striking at the most for its delicacy or weakness. And yet if you stood right in front of her, it would prove to be something more than just squeaking. It is necessary to see as well as hear her in order to understand her art. Even if it is only our every-day squeaking, the fact that a person should stand up so solemnly to do nothing out of the ordinary, is something unusual in itself. There is no art, certainly, to cracking a nut, and no one would think of collecting an audience together just to entertain it by cracking nuts. All the same, if somebody did do this and succeeded in his intention, it would no longer be just a question of nut-cracking. Or if it were only a question of cracking nuts, it would become evident then that we had neglected this art because we possessed such easy mastery of it, and that this nut-cracker was showing us its true nature for the first time, and it would even enhance the effect if he were somewhat less proficient in nut-cracking than the rest of us.

Maybe it is the same way with Josephine's singing; we admire in her that which we do not admire at all in ourselves, and in this last she agrees with us fully. I was once present when—as of

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course, often happens—some one called her attention to the general popular squeaking. I have never seen such a haughty, insolent smile as the one that appeared on her face; to all outward appearances Josephine is refinement itself, strikingly refined even among a people such as ours, which is rich in feminine personalities of this sort, yet at that moment she actually seemed vulgar. But with her great sensitivity, she herself must have realized this immediately, for she managed to get herself under control. This in any event is her way of repudiating every connection between her art and squeaking. For those of the opposite opinion she has nothing but contempt, and most likely, unconfessed hatred. This is no ordinary vanity, for the opposition, to which I myself half belong, certainly admires her no less than does the crowd, but Josephine wants not only to be admired, but to be admired in exactly the way she decides. Admiration alone is of no importance to her. And when you sit in front of her you begin to understand this; opposition can only be maintained at a distance: sitting in front of her, you realize that what she squeaks is not ordinary squeaking.

Since squeaking is one of our more thoughtless habits, it might be supposed that squeaking can be heard in Josephine's audience; we enjoy her art, and when we enjoy ourselves, we squeak; but her audience does not squeak, it is still as a mouse. We are as silent as though participating in that peace for which we all yearn, and of which at the very least we are deprived by our own squeaking. Is it her singing itself that enraptures us, or is it rather the solemn stillness surrounding that weak little voice? Once it happened that while Josephine was singing, some insane little thing in the audience began to squeak too in all innocence. Now it was altogether the same kind of squeaking that we heard from Josephine: a squeaking, still hesitant for all its practice, came from out there in front, and from back in the audience there came a self-oblivious childish little squeaking. It would have been impossible to point out the difference, yet we immediately hissed and whistled the disturber down, which was quite unnecessary, as even without that she would have stolen away in fear and shame, while Josephine swelled her triumphal squeak and spreading her arms wide and lifting her head as high as she could, grew quite beside herself.

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She is always like that. Every petty thing, every accident, every hindrance, a creak in the floor, some one grinding his teeth, any trouble with the lighting—all these she considers as designed to add to the effect of her singing. It is her opinion, to be sure, that she sings to deaf ears. There is no lack of enthusiasm and applause, but as for what she calls real understanding, she learned long ago to give up any hope of that. This being the case, she finds interruptions very useful. Any external thing that opposes itself to the purity of her singing and that can be overcome in an easy struggle—or even without a struggle, but simply by force of contrast—any such thing can contribute to the awakening of the crowd, and help to teach it, not, of course, understanding, but at least veneration and respect.

If petty issues serve her so well, how much more do the large ones. Our lives are very troubled, every day there come alarms, anxieties, hopes, fears, and a person could not possibly bear all this without the support of his fellows at every moment of the day and night. Yet even so, it often becomes just too difficult; at times as many as a thousand shoulders will tremble under a burden actually intended for only one. Then Josephine thinks that her moment has come. She will be standing there already, the delicate creature, with her diaphragm vibrating in an alarming way. It is as though she were concentrating all her strength in her singing, as though she were deprived of everything in herself, of every force, of almost every capacity for life not contributing directly to her singing, as though she were stripped and made ready for sacrifice, confided only to the protection of beneficent spirits; it is as though while so utterly rapt in her singing, a cold breath might kill her in passing. But just at the sight of this, we, her so-called enemies, would say to one another, "How can she even squeak if she has to strain herself so terribly, not to sing—we won't even mention singing—but simply to wring somehow a common, ordinary squeak from herself?" So it seems to us, but, as I have said, this is but a fleeting impression—an unavoidable one, it is true, but quick to pass. For we too are soon immersed in the emotion of the crowd, which is listening with bated breath, warm in the contact of body against body.

And most often, in order to collect around her a crowd of these people—who are almost always in motion, darting here and

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there on missions which are often not very clear—all Josephine would have to do is assume an attitude with her head thrown back, mouth half open, and eyes turned upward, signifying that she was about to sing. She can do this wherever she pleases, it does not have to be a place that can be seen from a distance, any obscure corner chosen on the moment's whim will do just as well. The news that she is going to sing will spread immediately, and processions are soon on the way. But frequently there will be obstacles, for Josephine likes to sing especially in times of disturbance when multifarious cares and troubles will have driven us upon many different paths, and try as we may, we cannot gather together as quickly as Josephine would like; and she may have to stand there in that solemn attitude of hers for quite a while without enough listeners present. Then she flies into such a rage, then she stamps her feet, swears in a very unlady-like way, and even goes as far as to bite. But even this sort of behavior does no harm to her prestige in our eyes; instead of trying to keep her exaggerated demands somewhat in check, we exert ourselves to satisfy them: messengers will be sent out to bring more listeners, this being kept secret from her; then people will be seen stationed on all the paths round about to wave to the on-comers to hurry; and this will all go on until barely enough of us have at last been collected together.

What makes the people go to so much trouble about Josephine? Such a question is no easier to answer than the one about her singing, with which it is connected. The first question might even be cancelled and identified completely with the second one, if it were possible to maintain that the people have surrendered themselves to Josephine unconditionally because of her singing. This, however, is not the case. Our people hardly know what unconditional surrender means; people such as these, who love slyness more than anything else, inoffensive slyness, of course, and childish whispering, and idle yet innocent gossip that does nothing more than exercise the tongue—under no circumstances can such people surrender themselves unconditionally. Josephine no doubt senses this, and it is against this that she struggles with every effort of her weak voice.

But general opinions of this kind should by no means be over-estimated, for the people do surrender themselves to Josephine, only not unconditionally. It is not easy, for instance, to laugh

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at Josephine. You might admit to yourself that there is much food for laughter in Josephine—and in an abstract sense we are always close to laughter; in spite of all the sorrows of our life, a kind of mild laughter is habitual to us—but we do not laugh at Josephine. At times I have the impression that the people conceive of their relationship to Josephine as one by which this frail, pitiable and somehow remarkable creature—remarkable, in her opinion, for her singing—has been entrusted to their care. The reason for this is clear to no one, but it seems to be an established fact. And no one laughs at that which has been entrusted to one; to laugh at that would be to fail in one's duty. The utmost malice that the most malicious among us can show towards Josephine is to say now and then, "Laughter fails us when we look at Josephine."

And so the people take care of Josephine the way a father would who has adopted a child that stretches out its little hand to him—whether in pleading or command, one could not tell. Our nation might be thought unequal to such paternal obligations, but actually, it discharges them, in this case at least, in exemplary fashion; no single individual is capable of doing what the nation as a whole can in this respect. The difference between the powers of that nation and the powers of the individual is so enormous in fact, that it suffices for the nation but to draw its protege into the warmth of its nearness in order to protect it. No one, to tell the truth, dares mention such things to Josephine. "I don't give a squeak for your protection," she would say. And we would think, "Yes indeed, that is just what you do, really." And besides, it does not disprove anything when Josephine rebels; it is rather the way of a child and the gratitude of a child, and it is the way of a father not to pay any attention to it.

But other things are involved which are more difficult to explain on the basis of this relationship between the people and Josephine. Josephine, you see, has the opposite opinion, and thinks that it is she who protects the nation. Her singing rescues us, supposedly, from dangerous political and economic situations—no less than that—and if it does not drive misfortune away, it at least gives us the strength to bear it. She does not put it in this way exactly, nor in any other way—she says little in general, she is silent among all the chatterers—but it flashes from her eyes, it can be read from her closed mouth—among us only a few can keep

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their mouths closed, and she is one of them. At bad news—and many a day it is one piece of bad news after another, some false, some half-true—she gets up immediately, although she usually drags herself wearily along the ground, and she stretches her neck to try to get a general view of her flock, like a shepherd before a storm. Of course, children make similar claims in their wild, ungovernable way, but Josephine's are not as unjustified as theirs. Certainly, she does not save us, nor does she infuse us with any new strength; it is easy to pose as the savior of such a nation, which, accustomed as it is to suffering, unsparing of itself, quick to decision, and familiar with death, seems timid only because of the foolhardy atmosphere in which it lives constantly, and being, besides, as prolific as it is daring—it is easy, I say, to pass oneself off after the event as the savior of such a people, a people that somehow always manages to save itself, even if at such a cost that the student of history—as a rule we neglect the study of history completely—blenches with horror. And yet it is true that precisely in emergencies we listen to Josephine's voice better than otherwise. The menaces hanging over our heads make us quieter, humbler and more compliant with Josephine's dictatorial ways; we gather together eagerly, press close to one another eagerly, especially as it is for an occasion having nothing to do with the agonizing main question; it is as if we were drinking a last hurried cup of peace together before the battle—and hurry would be necessary, which Josephine forgets all too often. It would not be a song-recital so much as a gathering together of the nation, and what is more, a gathering where all would be silent save for that little squeaking out front; the hour would be far too grave to spend in chatter.

Of course, such a state of affairs would not satisfy Josephine at all. In spite of the nervous uneasiness which fills Josephine because her position has never been quite clarified, she is so blinded by her self-importance that she fails to notice many things, and without too much trouble can be induced to overlook even a great deal more; a crowd of flatterers is continually busy towards this end, which is really in the general interest. — But to sing as a side-show, unnoticed, off in a corner at a gathering of the nation—certainly she would never sacrifice her singing for that, in spite of the fact that this would be no small thing in itself.

But she does not even have to do that, for her art is not un-

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noticed. Although we are really preoccupied with quite different things, and silence reigns by no means simply for the sake of the singing, and many of us do not even look up, but bury our faces in the fur of our neighbors, making it seem as though Josephine were exerting herself before us in vain, yet it cannot be denied that something of her squeaking reaches us irresistibly. This squeaking, lifted up at a time when silence is enjoined upon all others, is almost like a message from the nation to each of its individuals; in the midst of a crisis Josephine's thin squeaking is like the miserable existence of our people amidst the tumult of a hostile world. It does us good to think that Josephine, this nonentity as a voice, this nonentity as a performer, can still assert herself and find a way to reach us. At such moments, certainly, we could not endure a really artistic singer, even if one were to be found among us; we would refuse unanimously to put up with such nonsense. May Josephine be shielded from the realization that our listening to her is evidence against her singing. But she probably suspects this anyhow, otherwise why would she deny so passionately that we do listen to her? Yet she always manages to sing or squeak this suspicion out of her mind.

But even without this, there would still be one sure consolation for her, the fact that to a certain extent we actually do listen to her, in the same way, probably, that one would listen to an artistic singer; and she achieves effects for us for which an artistic singer would strive in vain, and which are granted only to her insufficient powers. It is most likely that this has something to do on the whole with our way of life.

Our people have no youth, just barely a tiny moment of childhood. It is true that demands are regularly raised that children be granted a special liberty, a special indulgence, the right to a little freedom from care, to a little silly romping, to a little play; we are called on to recognize this right and help make it an actuality; demands like these are raised and almost everybody approves of them, nothing is more worthy of approval, but there is also nothing which the facts of our life can less permit. The demands are approved, attempts are made to carry them out, but soon everything returns to the old state of affairs. Our life is such that a child has to take care of itself as soon as it can run about a little and recognize the world around it; the areas in which for economic

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reasons we must live dispersed are too great, our foes are too many, the dangers prepared for us everywhere too incalculable—we cannot remove children from the struggle for existence; if we did it would only mean their untimely ends. But to these sad reasons there should be added a more encouraging one, the fertility of our race. One generation—and each is numerous—presses close upon the others, children do not have time enough to be children. If other nations bring up their children carefully, if they establish schools for their little ones, if their children, these nations' future, stream out of their schools daily, for some time at least it is the same children that appear there day in and day out. We have no schools, and at the very shortest intervals of time there pour forth from our people immense swarms of children, merrily spluttering and chirping until they can squeak, rolling or tumbled along by the pressure of the others until they can run, clumsily carrying everthing along by their mass until they can see: our children! And not the way it is in the schools of those others, not the same children, not at all, but always and ever again new ones, without end or interruption; hardly does a child come forth but it is no longer a child, and new child faces, indistinguishable in their numbers and hurry, rosy with their joy, are already pressing behind it. As pretty as all this may be and as much as others may justly envy us for it, it must be admitted that we cannot exactly give our children a real childhood. And this has its consequences. A certain undying, ineradicable childishness pervades our people; in direct contradiction to the best in us, our unerring sense of the practical, we will often act like complete fools, and just the way children act foolishly: senselessly, extravagantly, on a big scale, frivolously, and all this often for the sake only of a little fun. And although, as is only natural, the joy we get out of it can no longer have the full force of the joy of children, at least some part of that is certainly present. And Josephine has profited at all times by this childish streak in our people.

But our people are not only childish, they are also to some extent prematurely old; childhood and old age are different with us than with others. We have no youth, we become adult immediately, and then we stay adult too long; a certain weariness and hopelessness leave a broad imprint upon the generally sturdy and optimistic character of our people. It is likely that our lack of

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musical sense has some connection with this. We are too old for music; its inspiration and its soaring flights do not go with our inertia, we wearily wave it away; we confine ourselves to squeaking; a little squeaking now and then is the thing for us. Who knows, perhaps there are musically talented persons among us; but if there are, they are inevitably suppressed by the character of their fellow citizens before they can unfold. Josephine, on the other hand, can sing or squeak, or whatever she calls it, to her heart's content and not bother us; it agrees with us, and we can put up with it very well. If there is any music in it, it has been reduced to an infinitesimal minimum; a certain tradition of music is preserved, but without letting it trouble us in the slightest.

However, Josephine has even more to give to a people of this humor. At her concerts, especially in times of crisis, only those who are quite young take any interest in the singer as such; they alone marvel at the way she curls her lips, expels the air from between her delicate front teeth, faints away in admiration of her own sounds, and then takes this collapse as a pretext for urging herself on to new achievements that become more and more incomprehensible. But it is plain to see that most of the crowd has withdrawn into itself. Here in their short respites from battle the people sit and dream; it is as though each individual were relaxing his limbs, as though the restless one were able to lay himself down for once and stretch out at his pleasure in the great warm bed of the people. And now and then Josephine's squeaks sound through these dreams—she calls it sparkling, we call it jerky; but anyhow it is appropriate here as nowhere else, finding its expectant moment in a way music hardly ever does. Something of our poor short childhood is in it, something of our lost and unrecoverable joy, but also something of our busy present-day life, something of its small, inconceivable and yet persistent and inextinguishable cheerfulness. And all this is expressed, really, without any grand gestures, but softly, whisperingly, familiarly, often a little huskily. Naturally, it is squeaking. What else could it be? Squeaking is the language of our people. But many squeak all their lives, and do not know it, while here squeaking is liberated from the bonds of daily life, and for a short while we too are liberated by it. We positively do not want to miss these concerts.

But it is still a long way from this to Josephine's contention

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that at these moments she infuses us with new energy, etc., etc. A long way, that is, for ordinary people, but not for Josephine's flatterers. "How can it be otherwise?" they will ask with really shameless impudence. "How else can you explain so great an attendance, especially in the face of immediate danger, an attendance so great that it has often interfered with proper and timely measures of defense against that danger?" Now this last is true, unfortunately, but it does not redound to Josephine's credit, particularly when one adds that whenever these gatherings were suddenly broken up by the enemy so that many of us had to lose our lives then and there, Josephine, who was responsible for all this, having perhaps actually attracted the enemy by her squeaking, would always be occupying the safest spot, and protected by her claque, very quietly and hurriedly, would be the first to disappear. Although everybody really knows about this, the next time that Josephine rises to sing at any place and time she pleases they will again hurry over. You might conclude from this that Josephine is almost above the law, that she can do whatever she wants to, even when it endangers the community, yet be forgiven everything. If this were so, Josephine's demands would be completely understandable. This freedom granted to her, this extraordinary gift, which really controverts the law and has never been given to anyone else, might be considered indeed a confession of that which Josephine claims, that the people do not understand her, that they marvel helplessly at her art, feel unworthy of her, and try by what is no less than an act of desperation to make good the suffering they cause her, and that in the same way that her art is beyond their comprehension, her person and its wishes are beyond their authority. Now this in any event is altogether untrue; perhaps the people yield to Josephine too quickly in details, but they surrender themselves unconditionally neither to her nor to anyone else.

For a long time now, perhaps since the very beginning of her artistic career, Josephine has fought to be released from all work in recognition of her singing; she is to be freed from care as to her daily bread and from all else connected with the struggle for existence, and this is to be shifted—probably—to the people as a whole. Some one easily carried away—there are such—might conclude this demand to be intrinsically justified simply by its exceptional nature and by the very state of mind capable of con-

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ceiving such a demand. Our people, however, have drawn other conclusions and have quietly rejected it. Nor have they troubled themselves very much to refute the arguments in its support. Josephine has pointed out, for example, that her voice might suffer from the exertions of labor, that as a matter of fact, the exertions of labor are slight compared to those of singing; besides, they deprive her of any chance of getting enough rest after singing and of strengthening herself for the next concert, she has to exhaust herself completely in the process, and that even so, it is impossible for her under these circumstances ever to attain the peak of her performance. The people listen to her and go on as before. These people, so easily moved, sometimes cannot be moved at all. Sometimes their refusal is so stern that Josephine herself is taken aback; she appears to give in, does her work properly and sings as well as she can; but this only lasts for a while, then she returns to the struggle with new energy—of which, for this purpose, she seems to have an inexhaustible supply.

Now it is of course obvious that Josephine is not fighting really for her literal demands. She is sensible, she is not afraid of work, since, indeed, the fear of work is alien to us on the whole; even if her demands were to be granted she would live no differently than before, her work would not interfere with her singing at all, and her singing itself, no doubt, would not get any better. So what she is really fighting for is but a public and unambiguous recognition of her art that will outlive time, and tower far above anything known till now. While almost everything else seems attainable to her, this stubbornly eludes her. Perhaps she ought to have directed her attack in a different quarter from the very beginning, perhaps she herself has recognized her mistake by now, but it is too late to retreat, retreat would mean being unfaithful to herself; therefore she has to stand or fall by this demand.

If she really had the enemies she claims to have, she might be able to watch the struggle amusedly, without lifting a finger herself. But she has no enemies, and even if some of us have objections to her now and then, this struggle amuses no one; if only because the nation shows a cold, judicial attitude here such as is rarely seen among us. And even if some one approved of this attitude in this particular case, he would be deprived of all joy by the very thought that the nation might act similarly towards him

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at some other time. Like the demand itself, the refusal as such does not really matter; what matters is that the nation can show such a solid front towards one of its own members, all the more solid in so far as it otherwise humbly takes a paternal, and more than paternal, interest in this same member.

If a single person had represented the nation as a whole here, one might think that as long as this person had been indulging Josephine, he had had a lasting and ardent desire to put a stop finally to his indulgence, that he had been indulgent to superhuman lengths in the firm conviction that indulgence would reach its true limits, nevertheless; if he had indulged her more than necessary, it was only in order to speed the matter up, only in order to spoil Josephine and incite her to more and more demands, until she had actually made this last one; and then indeed he had decided—abruptly, because it had been long prepared—on the final, conclusive refusal. Now this was most certainly not the case; the people do not have to play such tricks; besides, their esteem for Josephine is sincere and well-proven, and Josephine's demand was without a doubt so extreme that any simple child could have predicted its outcome. Yet it is possible that such conjectures play a part in Josephine's version of the affair and add more bitterness to the pain of having been refused.

But even if she does entertain such conjectures, they do not frighten her off. Lately the struggle has become even sharper; whereas before she only waged it with words, she has now begun to use other means—more effective ones, in her opinion, but in ours more fraught with danger to herself.

Some of us think that the reason Josephine is becoming so urgent is that she feels herself growing older, her voice getting weaker, and therefore it seems high time to her to begin her final struggle for recognition. I do not believe this is so. If it were, Josephine would not be Josephine. There is no such thing for her as growing old and losing her voice. When she wants something she is not influenced in her purpose by external things, but by an inner logic. She reaches for the highest laurels, not because they seem for a moment to hang a little lower, but because they actually are the highest; if it were in her power, she would hang them even higher.

But in any event this contempt for external obstacles does not

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hinder her from using the most dishonorable methods. Her rights are beyond all question for her, so what difference does it make how she attains them—especially since in this world, as it seems to her, the honorable methods are precisely the ones that always fail. It is just for this reason, perhaps, that she has shifted the struggle for her rights from the field of singing to one not very dear to her. Her claque has circulated remarks of hers to the effect that she feels quite capable of singing so that it would be a real pleasure to all classes of the people, including the remotest sections of her opposition, a real pleasure in the sense meant by Josephine, not in the sense in which the people have always claimed to have got pleasure from her singing. But, she added, since she could not adulterate the sublime and flatter the vulgar, things would have to remain as they were. It is different, however, with her struggle to be released from work; of course this also involves her singing, but she does not carry on the fight here directly by means of the precious weapon of song; any means she employs are good enough here.

So the rumor was spread, for example, that unless her demand was granted, Josephine would shorten her coloratura passages. I had never heard of these coloratura passages, nor have I ever noticed anything of the sort in her singing. Nevertheless, Josephine was going to shorten her coloratura passages: not eliminate them entirely for the time being, but just shorten them. It is said that she carried out this threat, but I at all events was never struck by any differences from her previous performances. The people as a whole went on listening as before, nor was there any change in their treatment of Josephine's demand. However, it is undeniable that there is often something as truly graceful about Josephine's thinking as there is about her figure. For example, after this last performance, she announced—as if her original decision had been too harsh or abrupt for the people—that at her next performance she would restore the coloratura passages in their entirety. But after the next concert she again changed her mind; she was definitely all through now with her full-length coloratura passages, and they would not be restored again until her demand had received a favorable answer. The people listened to all these announcements, decisions and changes of decision distractedly, the way an adult absorbed in his own thoughts listens distractedly to

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the chattering of a child, full of kindly feelings in principle, but out of reach.

But Josephine will not give up. For instance, she claimed recently to have hurt her foot at work, which made it difficult for her to stand as she sang; since she could only sing while standing, she would now have to shorten her songs. But no one believed that she had really been hurt, in spite of the way she limped and had herself supported by her followers. Granted even the special sensitivity of her little body, we are nevertheless a people of workers, and Josephine belongs to this people, and if we were all to limp every time we scraped off some skin, the whole population would never stop limping. It made no difference that she had herself led around like a cripple and showed herself much more often than usual in this pitiful condition, the people went on listening to her singing as gratefully and delightedly as ever, and no great fuss was made about the shortened performances.

As she could not go on limping forever, she invented something new; she pretended to be tired or in bad humor or to feel faint. And then, in addition to a concert, we had a play. We would see Josephine surrounded by her followers, who would be begging and pleading with her to sing. It would seem that she wanted to sing very much, but was unable to. Then they would comfort and coax her and carry her almost bodily to the place fixed upon in advance, where she was to sing. She would give in finally with unimaginable tears, but as she would get ready to sing with what was ostensibly a supreme effort, feebly, her arms not outstretched as usual, but hanging limply at her sides so that you got the impression that they were perhaps a little too short—just as she was about to sing, it would suddenly come to nothing again; first there would be a sudden, helpless jerk of her head, and then she would collapse before our eyes. But after that, to be sure, she would quickly pick herself up and begin singing—not much differently, I think, than before. Perhaps if you had an ear for the finest nuances, you might have detected a note of agitation that was slightly out of the ordinary, but which only heightened the effect. And at the end she would be even less tired than before; she would leave with a firm step—if her tripping little walk can be called that—refusing all assistance from her claque, and meas-

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uring the crowd, which would respectfully make way for her, with a cold glance.

This is the way things were until a short while ago, but the latest development, however, is her disappearance just at a moment when she was expected to sing. Not only have her followers looked for her; many others have volunteered in the search; but it has been of no avail. Josephine has disappeared, she does not want to sing, she does not even want to be asked to; this time she has abandoned us altogether.

It is strange how falsely she can reason, clever as she is; so falsely that you would think she did not reason at all, but was simply driven along by her fate, which in this world can only be a sad one. She has given up singing of her own accord, destroyed of her own accord the power she had gained over our feelings. How could she ever have gained this power, knowing our feelings so little? She hides herself and does not sing, but the people—a mass resting upon itself, which, despite appearances to the contrary, can only give, essentially, and can never receive gifts, not even from Josephine—the people continue, without apparent disappointment, calmly and majestically on their way.

For Josephine herself, the way must lead downwards. The time will soon come when her last squeak will sound and forever die. She is a small episode in the eternal history of our people, and the people will survive the loss. This will by no means be easy; how will it ever again be possible to hold our gatherings in complete silence? For were they not silent, really, even with Josephine? Was her actual squeaking noticeably louder and more vivid than our memory of it will be? Rather, did not the people in their wisdom esteem Josephine's singing so highly just because it was imperishable in this way?

For this reason, perhaps, we shall not be deprived of so very much; but Josephine, delivered from the earthly cares, which in her opinion are prepared for the elect, will lose herself joyfully among the unnumbered multitudes of the heroes of our nation, and, since we keep no history, will soon be forgotten in an intenser deliverance, like all her brothers.

(*Translated from the German by Clement Greenberg*)

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The Sense of the Past*

Lionel Trilling

I HAVE BORROWED the title of my paper this evening from one of Henry James' unfinished novels because the phrase, the sense of the past, suggests that the past is not only a matter of fact and knowledge but also of quality and sensibility. Henry James had another phrase which I shall borrow; he wrote of "the tone of time": I should like to speak of the effect that the tone of time has upon us in literature and to inquire how we can keep that tone true.

Of recent years the historical function of our profession has been repeatedly called into question. Again and again we have heard that the central theoretical problem we must face is whether our studies are properly to be historical or critical. The question has been posed, of course, by the partisans of criticism, for the historical predilection is the entrenched one in our universities. John Jay Chapman put the case against the prevailing attitude when he denounced "the archaeological, quasi-scientific and documentary study of the fine arts" for "endeavoring to express the fluid universe of many emotions in terms drawn from the study of physical sciences."

Nothing could be more salutary than the growing dissatisfaction with the academic assumptions. The world, we hear, is rapidly becoming unliterary. Since the 17th century literature has been increasingly distrusted. Now and then literature has protested this distrust and often, in claiming for itself a part in life, it has claimed a greater part than it can properly have, but still the world continues to withdraw its confidence—hence the tendency of the more or less literate to justify their pleasure in literature by the "useful ideas" they get from it. And it might be said of our profession that its very existence indicates a distrust of literature; an unprejudiced observer might conceivably say that we are incorporated for the purpose of making literature an object of knowledge and that only insofar as we can do that will we ourselves trust it. Certainly we support the distrust of literature whenever

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we do not keep the aim of pleasure superior to the aim of knowledge, whenever we justify literature by the history or science of literature. All sorts of studies are properly ancillary to the true study of literature—the study of causes, the study of the shapes men's minds have had in the past are not only legitimate but necessary. Yet when Professor Lovejoy in his influential book, *The Great Chain of Being*, tells us that for the study of the history of ideas a really dead writer is better than one whose works are still enjoyed, we naturally pull up short and wonder if we are not in danger of becoming like those Edinburgh body-snatchers who *saw to it* that there were enough cadavers for study in the medical school.

The critics have made us very sensitive to this danger by their revolt against the historical study of literature. Here we must distinguish: the revolt was not against the history of literature but against the scientific history of literature. When history gave up its literary connection it allied itself with the science of the 19th century which believed that the world was reflected with perfect literalness in the will-less mind of the observer. The new history had many successes and a strong influence upon literary study; one of the ways that literary study could become scientific was by the investigation of genesis, of how the work came into being. I am not concerned to show that the study of genesis is harmful to the right experience of the work of art: I do not believe it is. Part of the economy of the human mind is to think genetically. And I am inclined to believe that whenever the genetic method is attacked in itself we ought to suspect that special interests are being defended. So far is it from being true that the genetic method is inimical to the work of art, that the very opposite is so; a work of art, or any human thing, studied in its genesis can take on an added value. Still, the genetic method can easily be vulgarized and when it is used in its vulgar form it can indeed reduce the value of an object; in much genetic study the attention is so centred on the conditions of the work of art that the implication is clear that to the student the work of art is "nothing but" its conditions.

One of the attractions in the study of the conditions of a work of art is that it seems to offer a high degree of certainty. Aristotle tells us that every study has its own degree of certainty and that the

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well-trained man accepts that degree and does not look for more; we may add that there are different kinds of certainty and say that the great mistake of the scientific-historical student of literature is that he searches for a degree and kind of certainty that literature does not need and cannot allow.

The error of the scientific analogy made by literary scholars has of late been so often pointed out that the denunciation has become cliché. It is a denunciation that needs to be made with care. Anything, art included, may legitimately be made a subject of scientific study and insight gained by it. The great point is that we should not expect that the scientific study of, say, literature will necessarily assure us of the experience of literature; and if we wish to help others to the experience of literature we cannot do so by imparting the fruits of our scientific study. What the embattled critics revolted against was the scientific ideal of the Fact. They wished to restore autonomy to the work of art, to see it as a source of pleasure rather than as the mere object of knowledge.

The faults of these critics we know. Perhaps their chief fault they share with the historical scholars—they try too hard; no less than the historical scholars they fall into the error that Chapman denounced, "the great illusion . . . that anything whatever . . . could be discovered through hard intellectual work and concentration." We often feel of them that they make the elucidation of poetic ambiguity a kind of intellectual calisthenic ritual. Still, we can forgive them for their strenuousness, remembering that something has happened to our relation with language which seems to require that we make explicit and methodical what was once unconscious.

But there is another fault of the scholarly critics of which I should like to speak. It is that in their reaction against the historical method they make an almost conscious effort to forget that the literary work is ineluctably an historical fact and, what is more important, that its historicity is a fact in our aesthetic experience. Literature, we may say, must always be an historical study for literature is an historical art. It is historical in three separate senses.

1. In the old days the poet was supposed to be himself an historian, a reliable chronicler of events. Thucydides, of course, said that he was an inaccurate historian, but Aristotle said that

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he was a philosophic historian; and we, following Aristotle, suppose that a large part of literary activity is properly historical—the recording of personal, national and cosmological events.

2. Then too, the poet is historical in the sense that he is necessarily aware of the past of his own art. He is not always consciously aware of the past but he is always practically aware. His own work exists only in connection with past work, both in continuation and divergence and what we call his originality is simply his special relation to his tradition. I shall not linger over a point that has been fully developed by T. S. Eliot in his essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent." And Mr. Eliot reminds us how each poet's relation to tradition changes tradition itself, so that the history of literature is never quiet for long and is never merely an additive kind of growth. Each new age makes the pattern over again, forgetting what was once dominant, reviving what was forgotten, finding new affinities; we read any work within a kaleidoscope.

3. And in one more sense literature is historical. In the existence of every work of literature, its historicity, its pastness, is a factor of great importance. In certain cultures the pastness of a work of art gives it an extra-aesthetic authority. But even in our own culture with its ambivalent feeling about tradition, there inheres in a work of art of the past a certain quality, a fact of aesthetic perception. Side by side with the formal elements of the work and modifying these elements is the "tone of time," which, in any complete aesthetic analysis must be taken into account.

It is significant that the critics have concentrated their art on lyric poetry in which the historical element, though of course present, is less obtrusive than in the long poem, the novel and the drama. But even in the lyric the factor of historicity is part of the aesthetic experience, not merely a negative condition of the other elements, such as prosody or diction (though insofar as it is ignorance it is a limitation); it is itself a positive factor with positive and pleasurable relation to the other factors. The critics imply that this situation *should* not exist, but it cannot help existing and we have to take it into account.

Let me give an example: I once came late to a concert and took my seat after the first piece had begun. I had only time to glance at my program to discover that it was by J. C. Smith. It

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seemed clear to me that J. C. Smith was a specifically modern name; the piece I was listening to was remarkably in the 18th century manner: I concluded that Mr. Smith was a talented amateur, perhaps a musical banker or a gifted conservatory teacher—the piece was a very clever pastiche. I should, of course, have enjoyed the piece as a pastiche, but, like most people who know little about music, I am a snob and foolishly want only the best. But when I looked at my program again I saw that J. C. Smith was the Anglicized form of Johann Christian Schmidt and that name was of course not necessarily modern. The value of the music was enhanced. Then I learned that Johann Christian was Handel's music publisher in England: the piece was genuine if minor 18th century and I began to enjoy it. It was, as I say, snobbery not to have enjoyed the pastiche *as* pastiche, but I maintain that I was right in sharing the general sense that invented the word pastiche with its derogatory meaning. There is a firm critical-historical sense at work in that word; it states what we know to be true, that a man can only speak adequately in the language of his own time: it is upon our sense of the past that our sense of the pastiche depends.

We are creatures of time, we are creatures of the historical sense, not only as men have always been but in a new way since the time of Walter Scott. Possibly this may be for the worse; possibly we would be stronger if we believed that Now contained all things and that we, in our barbarian moment, were all that had ever been. Without the sense of the past we might be more certain, less weighed down and pessimistic. But we might also be less generous and complete. In any case, we have it and we must live with it.

And we must read our literature by it. Try as we will, we cannot be like Partridge at the play, wholly without the historical sense. It seems to me that the leap of the imagination which an audience makes when it responds to Hamlet is enormous; and it requires a comprehensive, though not necessarily a highly instructed, sense of the past. That sense does not, for most artistic purposes, need to be highly instructed: it can consist largely of the firm belief that there is such a thing as the past. A sense of history is not only a factual thing; it is a kind of faith.

It is only if we are aware of the reality of the past as past

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that we can feel it as alive and present. If, for example, you try to make Shakespeare literally contemporaneous you make him monstrous. He is contemporaneous only if we know how much a man of his own age he was; he is relevant only if we see his difference. Or take a poet closer to us in actual time: Wordsworth's Immortality Ode is acceptable to us only when it is known to have been written at a certain past moment. If it had appeared much later than it did, if it were offered to us now as a contemporary work, I think we would not admire it. The same is true of *The Prelude* which of all works of the romantic movement is closest to our present interest. In the pastness of these works lies the assurance of their validity and relevance.

The question is always arising: what is the real poem? Is it the poem we now perceive? Is it the poem the author intended? Is it the poem the author intended and his first readers read? Well, it seems to me that it is all these things, depending on the state of our knowledge. But in addition the poem is the poem as it has become an historical fact. That makes it a poem we can never wholly understand—other things, of course, make it that—and the mystery, the fenced-off area of the poem, is one of its aesthetic factors. We cannot know in its first existence the past that engendered us: full fathom five our father lies and of his bones are coral made; if nothing of him fades, it has certainly suffered a sea-change. The sea-nymphs that hourly ring his knell are sounding the tone of time.

To suppose that we can think like men of another time is as much of an illusion as to suppose that we can think in a wholly different way. But it is the first illusion that is exemplified in the attitude of the anti-historical critics. In the admirable poetry textbook of Mr. Cleanth Brooks and Mr. Austin Warren, the authors, themselves accomplished historical scholars, disclaim all historical intention. Their purpose being what it is, they are right to do so, but I wonder if they are right in never asking in their aesthetic analysis the question, What effect is created by your knowledge that the language of this poem is not such as would be uttered by a man now? To read, say, Wordsworth's Immortality Ode properly requires as much translation of its historical circumstances as of its metaphors. This the trained critic forgets; his historical sense is often so deeply ingrained that he is not conscious of it. But

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whether or not it is made conscious, the historical sense is one of the aesthetic and critical faculties.

But if the historical sense is always with us, it must, for that reason, be refined and made more exact. Above all, it must be kept complicated. History, like science and art, implies abstraction: we abstract certain events from others and we make this abstraction for a purpose. Try as we will, we cannot, as we write history, escape purpose; nor should we, for purpose and meaning are the same thing. But in making our abstraction, we ought to be aware of what we are doing; we ought to remember that our abstraction is not equivalent to the infinite complication of event from which we have abstracted. The historian, or the critic who makes conscious his ingrained historical sense, should always be humbly aware of the limits of his abstraction and be willing to complicate it. I should like to suggest a few ways in which we can complicate our sense of the past.

1. One question we ought to raise is whether, and in what way, human nature is always the same. I do not mean that we ought to settle this question before we get to work, but it ought to be always a real question for us. A thing which we know does change is the *expression* of human nature and we have to keep before our minds the problem of what relation expression has to feeling. A well-known Shakespearean scholar, Professor Stoll, has settled the problem out of hand by announcing a deep difference between what he calls "convention" and what he calls "life" and he insists that the two have no truck with each other, that we cannot say of Shakespeare that he is psychologically or philosophically acute because these are terms we use for "life" whereas Shakespeare was dealing only with "convention." This has the virtue of stating the problem, but of course it misses the point that "life" is always expressed through "convention" and in a sense always *is* "convention" and that convention has meaning only because of the intentions of life. Professor Stoll seems to go on the assumption that Shakespeare's audiences were conscious of convention; they were aware of it but certainly not conscious of it; what they were conscious of was life, into which they made an instantaneous translation of all that went on on the stage. The problem of the interplay between the emotion and the available convention for it, the reciprocal influence they exert, is a very difficult one, and I scarcely

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state its complexities, let alone pretend to solve them. But the problem with its difficulties should be admitted and simplicity of solution should always be regarded as a sign of failure.

2. A very important forward step in the complication of history was made when Professor Whitehead and after him Professor Lovejoy taught us to look not for the expressed but the assumed ideas of an age, what Whitehead describes as the "assumptions [which] appear so obvious that people do not know they are assuming them because no other way of putting things has ever occurred to them."

3. But a great regression was made when Professor Lovejoy in that influential book of his assured us that "the ideas in serious reflective literature are, of course, in great part philosophical ideas in dilution." I have not time to go into the error of this common belief. It is part of our suspiciousness of poetry that we undertake to justify it by making it a dependent art. Certainly we must question the assumption that gives the priority in ideas to the philosopher and sees the movement of thought always from the systematic thinker who *thinks up* the ideas to the poet who "*uses* them [what does that mean?] in dilution [not in concentration?]" We must question this even if it means a reconstruction of what we mean by "ideas."

4. Then another thing about which we may not be simple is the relation of the poet to his environment. The poet, it is true, is an effect of environment, but we must remember that he is himself no less a cause. He may be used as the barometer, but let us not forget that he is also part of the weather. We have been too simple in our notion of what an environment is; we have been too literal in our use of the word and too quantitative: we take a large and literally environing thing to be always the environment of a smaller thing. In a concert room the audience is of course the environment of the performer; but also the performer is the environment of the audience. In a family the parents are no doubt the chief factors in the environment of the child; but the child is to a large degree a factor in the environment of the parents and himself conditions the action of his parents to him.

5. Corollary to this question of environment is the question of influence. In its historical meaning from which we take our present use, influence was a word used to express a mystery. It

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means a flowing-in, but not as a tributary river flows into the main stream at a certain observable point; historically the image is an astrological one and the meanings which the Oxford Dictionary gives all suggest "producing effects by *insensible* or *invisible* means"—the "infusion of any kind of divine, spiritual, moral, immaterial or *secret* power or principle." Before the idea of influence we ought to be far more puzzled than we are; if we cannot contrive to be puzzled enough, we can induce the proper state of uncertainty by asking ourselves, "What have been the influences that made me the person I am?" Not that we ought to be ready to give up the idea of influence but we ought to have a notion of its vagueness. And that will give us a notion of what value it has.

5. In short, we have to open our minds to the whole question of causation in culture. Hume, who so shook our notions of causation in the physical sciences, raises some interesting questions of causation in matters of culture. "There is no subject," he says, "in which we must proceed with more caution than in tracing the history of the arts and sciences; lest we assign causes which never existed and reduce what is merely contingent to stable and universal principles." The cultivators of the arts are always few in number and their minds delicate and "easily perverted." "Chance, therefore, or secret and unknown causes, must have great influence on the rise and progress of all refined arts." But there is one fact, he says, which allows us to speculate and that is that the choice spirits arise from and are related to the mass of people of their time. "The question, therefore, is not altogether concerning the taste, genius and spirit of a few, but concerning those of a whole people; and may, therefore, be accounted for, in some measure, by general causes and principles." This gives us our charter, but we must see that it is a charter to deal with a mystery.

6. Yet another thing that we have not understood with sufficient complication is the nature of ideas in their relation to the conditions of their development and in relation to their transmission. Too often we conceive of an idea as being like the baton that is handed from runner to runner in a relay race. But an idea is rather like the sentence that, in the parlor game, is whispered about in a circle; the point of the game is the amusement that comes when the last version is compared with the original.

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As for the origin of ideas, ought we not remember that an idea is a formulation of a response to a situation? Since the situations in which people find themselves are limited in number and the possible responses also limited, ideas certainly do have a tendency to recur; and because people think habitually, ideas have also a tendency to persist when the situation which engendered them is no longer present. Then too, an idea, of another age may be attractive just because it is historical. So that ideas do have a certain sort of limited autonomy, though it is an autonomy of appearance rather than of reality. But from that autonomy of appearance there has grown up the idea of the perfect autonomy of ideas; it is often supposed that ideas think themselves, create themselves, have a life independent of the thinker and the situation. And from that we are often led to conclude that ideas, systematic ideas, are responsible for events.

A similar feeling is prevalent among our intellectual classes about words. It is being felt nowadays, under the influence of the claims of semantics, that we have been betrayed by words, that they are pushing us around. "The tyranny of words" became recently a popular phrase, and the semanticists offer us an easier world if only we assert our independence from words and arrange them in an orderly way. But a long time ago Dickens said that he was tired of hearing about "the tyranny of words" (he used that phrase); he was, he said, less concerned with the way words abuse us than with the way we abuse words. It is not words that make the trouble but our own wills. Words cannot control us unless we wish to be controlled. And the same thing is true of the control of systematic ideas. We are beginning to believe more and more that some ideas can betray us, others save us. The intellectual classes are learning to blame ideas for our troubles rather than blaming, what is a very different thing, our own bad thinking. This is the great vice of any intellectual class, that it is concerned with ideas rather than with thinking.

It is here, I believe, that one of the problems of our profession relates to practical matters. Consider for a moment these sentences from a really admirable biography of Byron recently published, and consider if the misconceptions of our profession are not in some part responsible for the assumptions that are here being used. Mr. Peter Quennell is making an estimate of the effect of

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the romantic movement upon our time. He concludes that the romantic movement failed. Well, we have all heard that before and perhaps it is true, though I for one know less and less what it means. Indeed, I know less and less what the failure of any movement in literature means: all movements fail and perhaps the romantic movement failed more than most because it attempted to effect more than most, possibly it attempted to effect too much. To say that a literary movement failed seems to suggest that literature ought to settle something for good and all, and that life ought to be progressively completed and restful. But see what the result of the romantic ideas is, according to Mr. Quennell:

> Nationalism was essentially a Romantic movement, and from nationalism springs the half-baked racial theorist with his romantic belief in the superiority of "Aryan" blood and his romantic distrust of the use of reason. So far-reaching were the effects of the Romantic Revival that they still persist in shapes under which they are no longer recognized. . . . For Romantic literature appeals to that strain of anarchism which inhabits a dark corner of every human mind and is continually advancing the charms of extinction against the claims of life—the beauty of all that is fragmentary and youthful and half-formed as opposed to the compact achievement of adult genius.

I suppose a little passage could contain no more errors of fact and of logic than this one does. Had it not been for Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Kant and Goethe we should never have had the iron rigidity, the desperate centralization which the New Order involves, nor the concentration camps and all the calculated cruelty: *From Shelley to Schickelgruber* must clearly be the next dissertation.

It is easy enough, of course, to reduce the argument to absurdity. We have only to ask whether we would not have been spared the Japanese aggression if Lafcadio Hearn had never lectured on the English poets in Japan. Or to ask why Germany and not ourselves responded so fiercely to the romantic ideas. André Gide uses the *reductio* more seriously when he replies to those in France who blame the defeat on the ideas of the French writers; as reported in PARTISAN REVIEW, he says that it would be as absurd to blame French literature for the present defeat as it would be to congratulate it on the victory of 1918.

It is easy enough to dispose of Mr. Quennell's conclusion, but

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that is not important: what is important is the effect which so dull a sense of the past can have upon our thought. For Mr. Quennell the past has no true reality; he cannot see Romanticism in its relation to its own present. His historical insensibility is not unique; it is being matched by the insensibility of other liberal minds. For example, W. T. Stace has written a widely praised book which lays the blame for Nazism on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Professor Stace had the will to lay the blame somewhere in the realm of systematic ideas because he wanted to identify our cause with another set of systematic ideas. To satisfy this will he misread Nietzsche, that good European, missed all his irony, all his deliberate ambiguity, forgot the historical context in which Nietzsche wrote, and found—What? Nietzsche's ideas? I think not. And not Schopenhauer's ideas, for the treatment of Schopenhauer is much the same. He has succeeded only in giving us a false sense of ourselves, in flattering us into the foolish belief that we descend in the line of perfect goodness from an imagined Plato and a storybook Athens.

A true sense of the past, a vivid hearing of the tone of time, a properly complex notion of history and a decent awareness of the difficulty of human life would have prevented this result. Ultimately the view I am describing is a dangerous one; it is obscurantist and demagogic. And such a view, I am sorry to say, has gained ground in this country. The pronouncements of Mr. Van Wyck Brooks and others are based on this false sense of the past which seems to justify putting the blame for present troubles on past ideas. In England it has gained even greater ground. I refer you to Mr. Eliot's comments (in PARTISAN REVIEW) on the London "Times" leading editorial called "The Eclipse of the Highbrow" and to Mr. Tom Harrison's survey (in *Horizon*) of all the English war books with their tendency to put the blame upon "advanced" ideas. It would be pitiful indeed if, by ineptly involving ideas of the past in our defense of liberal democracy, by attacking all ideas of the past which did not seem to serve the present moment, or which in some tortuous way can be seen as possibly making us question the exigencies of the present moment, we should ourselves be accomplishing the end we are trying to prevent.

I am conscious that in what I have said I myself have over-

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simplified. I hope it has not seemed that I have said that ideas, and the ideas of the past do not influence us. They do indeed, but in far more complex ways than any political prosecutor of ideas ever imagines and only in so far as they become ideas of the present. All that I am arguing against is the notion that ideas exist apart from the thinker and the situation. Behind every idea that is effective lies the human will and an idea is good or bad, morally speaking, according as the human will that uses it is good or bad.

I have oversimplified for emphasis, because I want to point out that we are facing a possibly dangerous cultural situation in which we of our profession have a considerable responsibility. In a recent essay, E. M. Forster spoke of the intellectual remorse which many of the English feel: they feel that if they had played less and theorized less all this mess would not have come about and, as Mr. Forster says, "the jelly of civilization would have slid out of its mould and stood upright in a beautiful shape." And this belief, he implies, is the result of an inadequate sense of the past: the jelly never stands upright in a beautiful shape. "Viewed realistically," he says, "the past is merely a series of messes, succeeding one another by discoverable laws no doubt, and certainly marked by an increasing growth of human interference; but messes all the same." And we may say that in response to these messes ideas develop, each trying to deal with its particular mess. To keep clear the perception that each idea inevitably relates to its particular mess and can have only a suggestive relation to any other mess is, it seems to me, a necessary work of our profession in its historical function.

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Poems

Byron Vazakas

TRANSFIGURED NIGHT!

Schoenberg

Late coming home
through the heaped white revery
of cotton-quiet snow
blue under the arclight,
a spectral car, glass-frosted,
steams with muffled crunch
through a world empty of the human.

And the heart is suddenly
empty of the human,
and so cold, and far, and free
like the pulsing, steel-pointed stars,
that just to forget is easy now,
and not to hate, nor to decide,
as though pain were merely
a kind of embarrassment
felt for another.

If it were really true,
this heaven of nothing,
meaning peace,
death would be without
the brittle finality of ice,
and I no longer wait
at windy corners on cold nights,
anticipating the warm body's touch,
the animal contact
for which I risk so much,
seeing that it is against
the wishes of others.

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And surrender at last
the will to struggle
in the ecstatic nirvana
of the shrilling cold . . .
snow thickens like memory,
mummy-wound, until the night
becomes a dream of itself,
and the self dissolves.

WAITING AT THE DECEMBER BRIDGE

I came into this year drunken with hope.
As the end draws near, I see so much undone,
and see myself grown lonely on the road.

Now it is December, and I wait at the bridge
spanning the canal. A catharsis of small snow
shifts like last year's vagary of peace, and is
diffused with a fine gesture of self-destruction
upon the black and muddy water.

Beyond the bridge, decision takes another step.
Houses are there, like any other, yet they seem
unreal, too, and slightly shabby in the fog.
I have seen all this before, perhaps in a dream
of violence when someone struck progress
from the clock, and time became
a child watching young men parade.

Somewhere, tonight was always waiting, lying
in wait, prepared to leap, anxious to strike,
yet came the way disaster often comes, modest,
polite about the casual accident, apologetic;
and a small neglect is transposed to war.

Some know it. There are some who, seldom
deceived, know that violence can come from
merely strolling in the park, until at last

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the phrases turn to weeping at the door.
Though few are certain, these few live beside
the bridge. The refuse of the days still flows
beneath. The stench of all without a will
stagnates within the ice-capped pools. Spring
will tell, and the melting will be more than tears.
And more than ever passed before, will flow
through the canal. I merely wait and watch
till wishes are the acts of those who wish
upon themselves. The bridge remains. Many
will cross. The black stream will be there.

Winthrop Palmer

THE COUNTRIES OF WOMAN

What wrong is right when two have been twain!
In any song I find my love too much
Ready to burn the world—to jump free
The live wire mortal may not touch—
Death only dares to choose eternity.
A woman is the country of a man.

Being woman Eve turned to stone;
Being in cloak and suit, a boy,
The man, vows to live in order for life
Till hot blood his fabric skin destroy.
What is the creature stirring in his wife?
A woman is the country of a man.

With jug and plate the Abyssinian
In smoke and brass has middle age her slave—
A curved, black brow sweeps up the stare
Heavy and heated, hunched in her cave
Over her wrist, her elbow, under her hair.
A woman is the country of a man.

To live single is to have lived in vain.
To entertain the retinue and power

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Life's outer surface must of needs be spread
As a table according to the hour
Of custom woman born and woman bred.
A woman is the country of a man.

Bronze woman, athlete, a fair amazon—
Her land's imperfect; the great fire spent,
She has no conscience kindliness or care
To draw the afternoon beneath her tent;
She thumbs the minutes like a bill-of-fare.
A woman is the country of a man.

A wrong to right with mercy made a Christian.
The gentle creature stirs a gentle feeling
Incapable of fury, tender, mild,
Touch can be delicate and healing—
A woman's wondering with child.
A woman is the country of a man.

Worship your marble goddess, rank pagan!
Nature controls a great enough estate—
Needs no ally of image nor of thought,
Mistress of reckless destinies and fate
Her air's unlimited; the lake, her river caught.
A woman is the country of a man.

Protesting girl, passion of puritan
The outcast she of a conceived desire
Locked in a composition of the flesh,
Fury in tears with drum and shivered lyre
Pinched by the grooves of reason's horrid mesh. . . .
A woman is the country of a man.

Arise, spirit from the grave, the loved one. . . .
A body of granite rebukes the copper rose,
"There is no time, there is no end but death,
The truth endures, the truth no mortal knows
Nor the spotted lizard fast to his mother earth."
A woman is the country of a man.

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Alfred Hayes

THE DRUNKEN BOY

Jean keeps a joint on the avenue.
Off Oak next to the undertaker's ring number ten.
The blinds are drawn, bacon fries on the stove downstairs,
Upstairs the boilermakers and the traveling men
Laugh in the upholstered parlor. . . .
The drunken boy comes reeling down the street.
In the allnight taxi stands
The exhausted hackies drop their heads upon their hands.
The foghorns cry across the river.
Whatever fears itself or fears the law
Appears at this hour
Smoking a cigarette or leaning in the shadow of a door.

Now let the statues in Schenley Park
Weep such tears
That shame engulfs the local charities
And clinic doctors take up furious pens:
The drunken boy's grown tired of his eighteen years.
With a slight, rattling cough,
Unsmiling, the woman slips her cheap kimono off.
Up from some ruined mining town,
Wilkes Barre, McKeesport, Lawrenceville,
Dead docks, the mines are all shut down,
She has escaped fatback and the local mill.
The drunken boy strips slowly from his clothes.
She wears, rolled above her knees,
Black mesh stockings, and retains her high-heeled shoes.
One breast, still firm, is trademarked with a yellow bruise.
And the boy goes forward and he embraces these.

Now if there are virgins left in this city,
Such children as
Old lechers seeing their clear eyes love
And madames for their innocence protect and pity,
Teach them the secrets of Egypt and give them poise.

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Empty the parochial schools tonight, and mate
The clean girls with the vigorous boys.
Let the pale librarian lost in the index
Turn on her doorstep and call her unhappy departing lover
And give him that which he pleads for.
The drunken boy shrieks in the fist of life.
The woman turns on the carbolic bed.
Her legs snap open like a pocket knife.

A roaring company of drunks and fools
Stand in the air,
And their teeth fixed with golden caps
And their fingers ringed with cheap jewels,
Take the boy into their violent ideas of fun.
He plunges with them into the abyss
And rides with them the diseased horses of the sun.
There in that world the freak is an athlete
And the dwarf a giant in his own desire.
He endures with them the stevedore's short ecstasy
And his hair stands upright and his toenails seem on fire.
The woman moves and his legs are wet.
Across the room an inexplicable shadow passes.
He smells the odors of flesh and soaps and sweat.

Down down down down down
As though the flight of stairs had no end.
She calls down the bannister, good night, honey,
Come again. And bring a friend.
Turns back to tuck away her money.
What fond father turns uneasily in bed
And awakens thinking of his absent son?
Is there a civic bureau spends a restless night?
Again the bull-lunged foghorn blows.
The drunken boy whimpers in a world of men,
Then stumbles homewards,
His body vomiting tears inside his clothes.

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Eve Merriam

SAVANNAH GEORGIA

Rages you and I feel every day
gorging to gouge the weak
are given in this lush land carte-blanche crazy play.

—Where *colored* does not refer to gushing rainbow
daily descendant sun
or Fourth of July pyrotechnic show.

Could live here tourist all one's life and more,
bounded by winterless warm,
plump shrimp, deliberate palm-tree decor;

chain gangs no more frequent than frequent hurricane
blasting only a little:
garden, chimney at most ruined by the rain.

Disease wears a monocle of glittering nature:
swampscape useless as cigarette ash,
but showy, the syphilitic full-dress peer.

Atmosphere is two weeks after war-end.
Though none has been declared,
and nothing but injustice to defend.

But there is that skeptic overweary air
extending from vast
master-bedroom to narrow butler-stair;

and the slot machines everywhere, like the butter-rotting flies,
no one hoping to win.
Not even the boneless adolescent eyes.

A lever clinks: up comes the usual blank.
Almost relieved,
return to slump in chair and suck in sweetcheat drink.

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2.

How measure exact degrees of evil?
Pleading that flabby oval
is less round than vicious circle?

Harlem, not so jerry-built as Georgia slum,
was even once the honored home
of heavy-eating aristocracy.

And only rents impossible to pay
are strung sky-high.
The park is near for after scrub-floor hours.

But cloudy acid dilute with sparkling ice
can still suffice,
though wretchings may delay the coroner's call.

Evil is evil, I am what I am.
We need to damn
what's done and leave immediately for new direction.

No baggage to take, no Western goal for hero.
Miles to travel, zero.
Georgia will do as well as any other place

to map to where *colored* shall mean rainbow
ascending sun on row
of equal row, and *segregate* be obsolete like *hate*.

ON BEING ILL

Anonymous flesh suddenly Mr. Master.
The big surprise: faithful butler packs a rod,
tells the professor to can the brains, the dollar words,
and pay some attention to him, or he'll get his by God!

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Cagliostro and the Charlatan State

Egidio Mattina

In the south, groups of brigands like the Camorra and the Maffia had organized, seeking to imitate as best they could that group of brigands which composed the State. . . . —G. A. Borgese

The Sicilian immigrant brought with him to this country, among other things, the so-called Southern Question. Essentially it presents the same features here modified by industrialism, that it did in *pre-fascist* Italy. For Mussolini has solved the Southern Question as far as Italy is concerned; i.e., he has made Southern criminalism as nationalistic and patriotic as Piedmontese militarism and Roman clericalism. The latter two did not acquire their nationalistic bias either until comparatively late in Italian history. The lack of patriotism among the military was one of the loudest complaints of Machiavelli, and of the patriots after him, until Piedmont, the most provincial of the Italian provinces, set itself up to furnish the nation with its first truly Italian army. The Maffia and the Camorra were the supreme expression of the Southerner's anti-Piedmontism: at their best the heroic reaction to the militarism and bureaucratism of the North. They suffered the fate of all outlaws, degeneration and corruption. At this point the State, recognizing a kindred soul, took them into its arms. . . .

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The Jewish usurer is a familiar historical figure. A similar role, in other fields, has been played by other peoples as well. The American Negro's talents are kept within a spiritual ghetto: eventually the colored man with ambition beyond being a white man's valet ends up a white man's clown. (If Mazzini had worn motley instead of black, Carlyle's England could have understood him better, and would have worshipped his Italian Soul.) . . . In the same way the system which mercilessly oppressed and brutalized the peasant set him up as a fool and laughed at him. (The English word clown has a Marxist history.) And so just as the good American consoles himself for all the raping and murdering he commits on the black by laughing at him, Northern and other respectable Italians picture Naples as the clown of Italy, and Sicily as its whimsical murderous boor. Bergamask Arlecchino, grown fat and prosperous, laughs at Neapolitan Pulcinella, still hopelessly in cap and bells.

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Today it is no longer necessary to explain that the Southerner became an outlaw by necessity not by choice; nor yet by reason of his Semitic (Berber) ancestry, as the Italian Jew Lombroso charged against the Sicilians—which did not prevent him later from becoming converted to spiritualism by Eusapia Palladino, the notorious Neapolitan medium. (Italy's criminal anthropology was anti-Sicilian, like that of Harvard's Hooton, before it became anti-Jew.)

Nor that the unpleasantness of Naples is not due to the people of "really a different sort of race from the northern Italian."[1]

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A black poppy grows in Naples, which is no ordinary industrial city. The Lottery gives her the character of a proletarian's Monte Carlo. She has much in common with such cities as Bucharest, an international whorehouse disguised as a city, or Reno, the American divorce-mill. The artificiality of the vitality displayed by these places is a distortion of the social and economic forces operating in an ideal Marxian city. They are holy lands, geographical equivalents of holidays—Lourdes, Niagara Falls, Switzerland, Hollywood—each giving to its inhabitants a mentality in which the class instinct, especially of the proletariat, is blunted; like that of men living perpetually on Christmas Day.

Pythagoreanism, with its mystico-mathematical devotion to Number, was "originally a political and social movement in the Greek cities of southern Italy."[2] What relations may exist between the numbers racket and Pythagoras (or between the Southerner's preoccupation with dreams and Freud) is not for me to say. But to the Neapolitan, Fascism is only another form of the Lottery. Before Mussolini the worker spent his miserable wages on lottery tickets; later he gave up his meager portion of liberty in the hope of winning back full social and economic freedom. As in all lotteries run by the government the returns were very small indeed.

Consider the fate of the Neapolitan priests, whose chief function in society was not the dispensing of penances and indulgences but of numbers for the lottery. The Church, a place in which the coins of Caesar were exchanged for the coins of God, found itself on the verge of spiritual bankruptcy. The pre-fascists had of course succeeded in nationalizing gambling and prostitution, but it remained for Mussolini with his etherealized political economy to raise this form of socialism to a spiritual plane. The priesthood has been all but put under civil service. The Pope (who received strictly monetary compensation for his expropriated spiritual properties) represents a banking standard as outmoded in the celestial world as the gold standard in the material. Il Duce pinch-hits for La Madonna on the new coins of Heaven—brass for gold. True, St. Jan-

[1] Randolph Bourne.

[2] Webster's New International.

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uarius, the notorious old charlatan,[3] is still the patron saint of Naples—the patron saint of all Cagliostros,—but his popularity is being vigorously contested by the Redeemer of the Marshes. An exasperated Neapolitan no longer swears at the saints; he swears at the government.

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The specific character of crime in the South likewise offered no great obstacle to the Fascists. (The Army and the Gangs, Piedmont and the anti-Piedmont, were so much bluff.) The conquests of Fascism in the South were all negative ones. The Liberal regimes had completed the corruption of the masses. Mussolini merely represents a government that has abandoned all pretence of reforming them ("the Southern Question does not exist"), and exploiting the exinanition of Southern society for all it is worth. "Crimes of violence rank relatively high among the Italians, also for homicide their ratio is above that for the native [U. S.] born. In regard to crimes against property, family offenses, forgery, drug laws, drunkenness, the Italian rate is well below the average for the native born."[4] A formula: high frequency rate of crimes of violence plus low frequency rate of crimes against property and institutions: which neatly fitted the requirements of the Fascists.

The institution of Wives has no real interest in abolishing the institution of Whores. And what would Gangsters do without the help of the Police? The liberal governments tolerated crime in the South from no Voltairean motives. And Fascism only introduced a foreign element into the make-up of the Southern "criminal." Before that the Italian State resembled the universe of Leibnitz, with its scientific division of labor between the forces of Good and the forces of Evil; i.e., while the Southerners sold the bodies of their daughters, Northerners sold their mothers' souls.

But in America the Cagliostran, owing to his retarded spiritual development, preserves his original character intact. (Generoso Pope's Fascism, like Italian Fascism before 1938, does not yet include anti-Semitism in its arsenal.) Between Charles Ponzi in 1920 and Filippo Musica in 1938, both natives of Southern Italy, the Cagliostran character in this country had not changed much. Let me only point out the contrasts in the characters of Musica and Richard Whitney, and in the backgrounds of the two men. (A. P. Giannini has many things in common with Whitney, but hardly anything with Musica; it is my guess that he is of North Italian ancestry.) Ponzi and Musica did not come to Wall Street by way of Harvard Law School but by way of Mulberry Street. (Mulberry Street's banking is to Wall's what Naples is to Lombardy.) Let us try to imagine what

[3] ". . . the famous sacred blood of San Gennaro or Januarius; which is preserved in two phials in a silver tabernacle, and miraculously liquefies three times a year, to the great admiration of the people." (Dickens)

[4] *The Italians of New York* (Federal Writers' Project)

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would have happened if Whitney and Musica could have met alone some place, after they had been revealed to one another; say by being placed together in the same prison cell. And let us in some such manner bring Wall St. and Mulberry St. face to face. I *know* what would happen. In the end Whitney would succumb to Musica and Mulberry St. would vanquish Wall. Spiritually, that is. Physically the conquerors would destroy themselves.

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To anyone who reads the story of the fake Sicilian Count, the fake Doctor, it will be evident that he was as much the victim as the victimizer of the society and the age in which he moved. His real crime proved to be that his diploma was false. The European aristocracy forgave him his false title of nobility; but the middle classes, clinging, then as now, to their philistinism as fiercely as if it were a title of nobility, never forgave him his false diploma in medicine. Cardinal de Rohan, one of the chief culprits in the Diamond Necklace Scandal which began the ruin of Cagliostro, had been consigned, along with the pseud-Count, to the Bastille, where he lived "in almost as much comfort as if he had been in his own palace. . . .

"As money—and Cagliostro had plenty of it—like rank, was able to purchase equal consideration in the Bastille, the contrast in the treatment of the two persons almost warrants the supposition that the jailers derived no little amusement from making sport of the sufferings of one who was alleged to be immune from those ills to which mere clay is prone. There are many people to whom a weeping Pierrot is as funny as a laughing one."[5] . . . A mocked and crucified Antichrist.

Eighteenth century magic, with its unrestrained logic, was often more advanced, if I may say so, than eighteenth century science. At any rate Sicily has never produced a medicine man, legitimate or quack, to equal Cagliostro in sheer genius. Our own age is rich in examples.

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The quotation which heads this article is a key to the life and the character of the South. The Southerner met the competition of the State of Piedmont, a competition moreover brought into his very home in the spirit of a challenge, with the creation of a State of his own, a quack of a State to be sure. The banditry in his nature was given full play. This anti-State had a society of its own: political bandits, literary bandits (like Hitler's Karl May), medical bandits, clerical bandits, etc., etc. Quackery was elevated to the dignity of a social system. Politicians without delegation (like those bandits scurrying out of Europe before Hitler's armies, statesmen without states), priests without parishes, friars without monasteries, officers without troops, doctors without medical schools and hospi-

[5] J. T. Trowbridge, *Cagliostro.*

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tals, without any patients, without, in short, diplomas, aristocrats without culture, without even any money—tossed together somehow a whole humbug of a private social system.

An observant English consul in Sicily wrote in the last century that the Sicilians were more interested in *seeming* than in *being*. And the theme that haunted Pirandello was not the product of pure accident.

The poet and Garibaldian, Nievo, appointed vice-intendant of the National Forces in the island, was nearly buried in the scramble for posts in 1860. "Even before the capture of Palermo was complete, even before the Bourbon troops had signed the capitulation, no less than 3000 petitions for employment had been sent in, each petitioner setting forth his own claims on the State in terms of fulsome panegyric."[6] Nievo complained of the "Princes and Princesses, Dukes and Duchesses by shovelfuls, coveting salaries of twenty ducats a month." Cavour absorbed some of these Sicilians into his army of bureaucrats; the rest in desperation and mortification manufactured a bootleg State.

The masses hated the new State on their own account. It was *the people* who composed Garibaldi's own Army of the South, an "undisciplined horde." Victor Emmanuel refused even to review these new *sans culottes*. The Piedmontese "were not disposed to run the risk of disorganizing their Northern army by incorporating into it such an element of disorder."[7] . . . If Garibaldi had only given the word these Southerners would have taken Italy apart again, piece by piece.

Thus the charlatan state, like others, is complicated with class conflicts. All charlatans are not of the same color, even within the same international class. There is a great difference between Hitler and Mussolini: England might have produced the latter but not the former. True, eighteenth century England produced George Gordon, one of the most significant figures in her history. England too in this century produced charlatans, like Havelock Ellis, but they are as far removed from Lord Gordon as Clive Bell, the Bloomsbury anarchist, is from Guy Fawkes, the last of that breed in England.

●

The Sicilian character is the bastard child of the island, its mother, and the particular historical rulers, i.e. oppressors, of the island, its father. It has shapes as varied as the historical shapes of Sicily's rulers. Cagliostro's father was all Europe. The Maffioso is a shame child of Piedmont.

There is a constant factor in this "Sicilian" character throughout all the eras of the island—revolutionary, feudal, and capitalist. From the great leaders of the Sicilian slave-wars in the second century before Christ, ex-jugglers and ex-bandits from Syria and Cilicia, who, vomiting fire and uttering oracles and with prophecies and other "edifying impos-

[6] G. M. Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*.
[7] E. W. Latimer, *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*.

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tures,"[8] fashioned superb revolutionary armies that heroically defied the Romans until they were completely exterminated, the last of their leaders killing himself on a deserted altar, consecrating his blood to the infernal deities. For Sicilian priests like Pantaleone, and for the unknown friar "black as an Ethiopian" who led the Garibaldian rabble against the Bourbons and was the first to fall in one of the battles of 1860, the mother's gene is dominant.

Contemporarily, Fascism has abolished capitalism in all but fact; and while burning its effigy at the stake makes a violent noise on paper. (Nobody outside Italy takes D'Annunzio's politics seriously: a boy scout made mayor of the city for the day; but Mussolini's "theories" are taken internationally as gospel.) Mussolini's decrees abolishing the *latifundia* of Sicily are about as significant as the Sicilian Constitution of 1812, of sorry fate, which abolished feudalism; i.e., as Trevelyan wrote, the large farms were now called "*ex-feudi.* Before 1812 they were *feudi.*" Mussolini has learned much, too much, from the English. Today an ex-capitalist government run by ex-socialists writes away the ex-feudalism spawned by Englishmen, kidnapped by Neapolitans, ransomed by Piedmontese. The genealogy of the modern Sicilian character.

[8] Mommsen.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Books

THE HISTORIAN AS MORALIST

A Generation of Materialism 1871-1900. By Carlton J. H. Hayes. Harper. $3.75.

The aim of this book is to exhibit the final three decades of 19th century Europe as the fulfillment of tendencies initiated by the 18th century Enlightenment. In at least one respect Professor Hayes has successfully achieved his aim: he has written a history of Europe, and not simply a history of individual European nations: and he has indicated the sense of intimate connection between the political, economic, and intellectual events of the period under consideration. As a consequence, his book is refreshing reading. Without fearing to trace the course of happenings across national boundaries, it recounts the development of power politics, the transformation of traditional liberalism, and the rise of neo-mercantilism, imperialism, and various popular movements; and without keeping them in separate water-tight compartments, it also examines the significant shifts in religious thought, the trends in various technologies and arts, and the impact upon all of these of the expansion and popularization of science. To be sure, there are gaps and inadequacies in the tale, some of them serious: for example, next to nothing is said of intellectual developments in Eastern Europe, the account of literary and artistic developments is little more than an incomplete catalogue, the discussion of 19th century science is both superficial and distorted, and the analysis of the actual influence of movements such as Marxism is at best cavalier. Nevertheless, Professor Hayes does supply at least the minimum information concerning the various significant trends during a crucial period of European history, and he does convey successfully some of its characteristic flavor.

As the title of the book suggests, Professor Hayes's survey is made in the light of a definitive interpretation. For according to him, the period under discussion manifests two features which, however incompatible they may appear, have a common source. It is a period during which the liberal ideals of progress, democracy, and human betterment through scientific control of nature were at the zenith of their influence; but it is also a period during which the ground was laid for the contemporary anti-democratic, authoritarian, and brutalized conceptions of the social order. Both characteristics, according to the author, flow from the materialism of the period: from its devotion to material concerns, and from its apotheosis of "mechanical" science as the guide of life. It is upon this thread that Professor Hayes strings the events of three decades of European history.

It must certainly be acknowledged that the generation under consideration was devoted to material concerns. Its members were heirs to the this-worldly tradition which destroyed the social and intellectual foundations of the middle ages. They accepted without question the seculariza-

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tion of social institutions, they prized the achievements of a secular natural science, and they sought to establish a decent social order by controlling and transforming natural goods. But in what way, the reader cannot help asking, does this set of traits differentiate the last three decades of the 19th century from almost any other comparable period of European history since approximately the Reformation? And the reader's perplexity is only heightened when Professor Hayes makes this set of traits responsible for our present ills. Thus, it is correct to say that a man who never goes near water stands in no danger of drowning; but to "explain" the fact that a man drowned by noting that he ventured near water is verbal jugglery. Similarly, it is true enough that if our present social maladjustments are consequences of our attempts to control natural and human resources, then such matters would not now plague us were we not concerned with them; but to "explain" our material difficulties by our material concerns is again sheer verbalism. An explanation to be worth anything must be differentiating: surely not every one who ventures near water drowns, and surely not all devotion to material concerns leads to social disaster. Accordingly, this phase of Professor Hayes's thesis explains nothing; in stating it, he is simply uttering a jeremiad on the sins of modern civilization.

Professor Hayes makes much of the "materialistic" and "mechanical" character of 19th century science as being the handmaiden, if not the cause, of nationalistic and imperialistic ambitions. He heaps ill-disguised and well-merited scorn upon the unholy uses to which Darwin's theory of natural selection were put by social theorists, as well as upon the ridiculous extravaganzas which reputable thinkers and established publicists acclaimed as the last word of science. Race prejudice, social inequality, and sheer brutality were stimulated and defended by pseudo-biological arguments, and this fact must surely be credited to the debit side of the case for hasty intellectual syntheses and careless popularization. What is not evident is the conviction, shared by Professor Hayes, that responsibility for this must be born by "materialistic" and "mechanistic" science. He nowhere explains what he understands by these terms; however, he does subscribe to the view that recent physics and biology have disproved the claims of any science which may be so characterized. But in accepting this view, his credulity has been victimized by recent popularizers of scientific researches; and he exhibits the same willingness to believe on little or no evidence what he desires to be the case, which he ridicules so effectively in 19th century publicists. The point is that recent physics has not disproved materialism. To be sure, the *science of mechanics* can no longer be regarded as the universal discipline to which every other inquiry must in some way be reduced; but this conclusion was already evident in the preceding century with the advent of electro-magnetic theory. On the other hand, physics and biology are today no less "materialistic" and "mechanistic" than they were in the 1870's, in the sense that their goal still is the discovery of the structures or mechanisms of material bodies

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and in the further sense that explanations of even purposive behavior are sought which make no use of final causes.

The truth seems to be that Professor Hayes has little sympathy for any naturalistic type of explanation for social phenomena. Nowhere in his book is there even a half-way sympathetic statement of the aims of those who try to use the methods of the natural sciences in the study of human affairs—certainly none comparable with the understanding he exhibits for the aspirations of Leo XIII. On the contrary, he flatly rejects as "scarcely scientific" the acceptance of the general working hypothesis according to which the origin and nature of man is to be explained in physico-biological terms, on the ground that such an approach leaves "no room for God's creation or man's soul" (pg. 124). Pragmatism is equated with amoralism and the gospel of success at any price; and the various attempts to establish a naturalistic basis for morals are dismissed by citing James Ward's conclusion that the only solid basis for ethics is a theistic interpretation of the universe. Professor Hayes sees in the anti-clericalism of the late 19th century only sectarian intolerance, allegedly incompatible with the professed ideals of science and its liberal followers; and he regards the "conflict" between science and religion as really pointless, on the ground that no genuine conflict can arise between them since the categories of science are not "ultimately" explanatory. In the light of these commitments, the reader is entitled to conjecture whether the author of this book has an adequate grasp of the nature and aims of naturalistic (i.e., "mechanistic" or "materialistic") science, and of the social conditions for its successful functioning. The reader is certainly entitled to conclude that there is no basis whatsoever for attributing our present social ills to the dominance of mechanistic science, in spite of the disreputable uses to which its theories may sometimes be put. And in point of fact, it is an open question whether the misuse of Darwinian biology has been any worse than the employment of theological and biblical writings to support the institution of human slavery or to oppose badly needed social reforms.

Professor Hayes's dislike of mechanistic science brings him into conflict with the Marxist interpretation of history. In particular, his discussion of 19th century imperialism aims to show that the economic interpretation of this phenomenon is false, on the ground that imperialism is primarily a manifestation of *nationalism* and only incidentally the outcome of economic pressures. The evidence Professor Hayes produces seems to this reviewer to be fatal to an *exclusively* economic interpretation of the subject at issue. However, Professor Hayes is not content with this, and insists that nationalism provides the only ground for understanding imperialism. He thus counters one bit of dogmatism with another no less dubious. He certainly exhibits no clear method for evaluating the relative strength of the factors he employs as explanatory categories; and he would have been wise not to claim that he had established something which only such a method can establish. As it is, some of the evidence

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he adduces for his own thesis, such as Bismarck's late conversion by German industrialists to an expansionist program, serves as plausible support for the thesis he is interested in refuting. And in spite of his persistent attempt to read his materials almost exclusively in moral and psychological terms, that very material will persuade many of his readers that among the factors which make intelligible the generation of materialism the economic ones play essential if not exclusive rôles.

Professor Hayes's book appears to the present reviewer as being essentially a critique of secular explanations in general, and of naturalistic theories of society in particular. The book shows beyond peradventure that the uncritical acceptance of the conclusions of science in one domain of inquiry as the norms for every other domain, is both poor science and dangerous social policy. Had Professor Hayes been content with making that claim, his book would have been uniformly enlightening. He is in fact after more important game, and to at least one reader that game appears to be the secular culture of post-reformation Europe. For who can fail to understand how Professor Hayes would answer his own rhetorical questions, whether the men of the 19th century "with all its mechanical inventions and material gains, were actually any wiser or happier or clearer-eyed or more virtuous than men of pre-machine ages" (pg. 340), and "whether Europe or Western civilization can endure if cut off from its historic Christian roots" (pg. 135)? His critique of materialism cannot appear plausible to those who reject the assumptions of scholastic metaphysics or who do not find their social ideals adequately expressed in the aspirations of Catholic Christianity. ERNEST NAGEL

LOOSE TALK ABOUT JOYCE

James Joyce. By Harry Levin. New Directions. $1.00

Works of art get us to talk to each other. Some day they may inspire us to talk well. As long as there are authors who have something to say, we too can say something. A French literary critic under the influence of Stalinist anti-intellectualism once attacked Dostoyevsky on the grounds that his novels provide topics for conversation. Mais que voulez-vous, monsieur? Why write about books if you think their function is to make one mute?

Whoever does not look forward to being mute must grant that one of the *values* of art is to augment his fund of what is significantly sayable. One may properly ask, in evaluating a work: how many conversations has it incited? There are books, it is true, which everybody, as the phrase goes, talks about. But the phrase is inaccurate. The Bestseller is one of the modern devices for preventing people from realizing that they have nothing whatever to say to each other.

The art of James Joyce, characterized by the stupid as "uncommunicative" has for twenty years been marvellously creative of conversations. Nor has Joyce ceased to stimulate discourse and suggest that speech may be valuable.

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Here is some more talk about Joyce by Harry Levin. Let us evaluate it as talk. It is friendly, philological, well-intentioned and, in a superficial way, orderly. Levin has really read Joyce, including *Finnegans Wake*. He gives the impression of having enjoyed this work, and when his analyses, dissociations and speculations as to the "true" meaning of Joyce's wisecracks become a bit wearisome, there are always cleverly selected quotations to keep the conversation lively. But what is surprising about Levin's rhetoric is its lack of critical conviction. Precisely because literary discourse cannot completely quantify its judgments does it become necessary for the critic to prove, by the quality of his rhetoric, that the values he presumes to find in the work really exist for him. Levin's lack of style correlates nicely with the indecisiveness of his evaluation. He appears to invent weaknesses in Joyce in order to give the appearance of impartiality. For instance: Levin remarks that Joyce would not have been able to describe the death of Princess Bolkonsky or the incoherence of Peeperkorn. This is like saying that Joyce has the defect of being neither Tolstoy nor Thomas Mann. Now what kind of talk is this?

Foolish talk and one wonders at it coming from a critic as intelligent and serious as Levin. Does it come from a desire to appease the literary reactionaries who in the last few years have become so arrogant and voluble? Or is Levin, so competent at philological analysis, incapable of making a literary evaluation?

In any case it is just at the point where critical judgment begins that Levin ceases to be interesting as a conversationalist. LIONEL ABEL

POEMS IN EXILE

Fuerchte Dich Nicht! By Berthold Viertel. New York. Barthold Fles Verlag. $2.00.

This is a very important book. First, because it is the first volume of verse by Berthold Viertel since 1921; secondly, because it presents, from a new angle and in a new manner, the spiritual autobiography of the central European Jewish refugee; thirdly, because it is an original collection of poems in the German language published by a German in wartime New York.

Viertel the poet is already known to a considerable circle of readers in this country. But there are few people, perhaps, who are acquainted with the whole range and capacity of his talent: his stories, his critical essays, his vigorous political writings, his dramas, his translations, his extraordinary novels. And another kind of public, ignorant of any of these productions, will remember his pioneer spirit in the German theater, and his film-work in London and Hollywood. To that many-sided talent, *Fuerchte Dich Nicht* is a wonderful introduction.

"One sings to one's self in the dark," writes Viertel in his preface, "and the tune is not a lively one. A man doesn't want to lose touch entirely with his beginnings. He tries to remember how things were; to

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understand how all this came to happen. He must seek out the fault which brought on the great disaster—*not only in the Enemy, but within himself.* Again and again, it is the voice of his own conscience which gives him eloquence. His need is urgent and not to be denied. It is not the need to forget, but, most deeply and vividly, to achieve realization. . . ."

Viertel goes back to the search for his beginnings; back to his native Austria. He remembers Marie the cook, and the songs and poems she sang him; he remembers the Christkindlmarkt, and the narrow lanes of the city, a man who limped and whom he followed because "Ich wollte wissen: wohin hinkt der Mann?" and the many girls who didn't limp and whom he followed also, with a different kind of curiosity. He remembers his Mother, and Karl Kraus, the hero of his youth, and his Father, who used to stand thinking with his head on one side—just as he himself stands today. Then, with a flash of bitterness which reminds one of Yeats, he sums it all up:

Zwischen katholischen Huegeln
Mit ihren gruenen Waldfluegeln
Sitzen
Duerre Kirchturmspitzen,
Die den Himmel anritzen.
Oesterreichisch bellen die Hunde.
So ging eine Welt zu Grunde.

Probing back into the earliest past he knows, Viertel detects, amidst all the sweetness, cells of that infection, that decay which was to spread to the whole body—the lack of awareness which made error possible, the laziness which let things slide over the edge of destruction, the failure to love which gives purchase to the power of hate. The cafe-table was set upon the quicksand—and one bright morning, obeying the simplest laws of nature which everyone had overlooked, the world heaved and sank, choking the epigrams in the throats of the critics, and swallowing up the chess-boards with their brilliant gambits. The survivors, scattered in flight over the foreign countries of the earth, were at first too dazed to know exactly what had happened. The pathos of this bewilderment, the desperate clutching at immediate realities, the heartbreaking struggles to adjust onesself to an alient environment, are beautifully pictured here:

Winzig sind uns die Sterne
Und New York riesengross.

But this was only the beginning. Slowly, inexorably, with many pauses and respites and warnings, the crack in Europe widened and deepened, splitting frontiers, engulfing cities, draining oceans. The process is still continuing, the disaster is daily widening, as these lines are being written. It is with the understanding of this larger process in general, and of its special reference to the poet and his kind, that this book is chiefly concerned. And, unlike the works of the political journalists, Viertel need have no fear that it will be out of date next season. A man of 1980 could read nothing else and still form a vivid picture of the moral predicament and human crisis of the nineteen-thirties. He could meditate long and profitably upon its symbolic figures—the spiritual bankruptcy of the man

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who jumped from the skyscraper, the futile but magnificent protest of the Berlin landlady, the utter incredulity of the small boy before the death of his dog, that unthinkable disaster which Nanny, surely, could never allow. Indeed, some of these pieces will perhaps be easier to appreciate and evaluate coolly forty years from now. At present, they are almost too painful, they speak too plainly to the wretchedness of our condition.

Viertel's title is taken from Isaiah: "Fear not, neither let thy heart be faint . . ." and the book ends on a note of strength and courage, a superb adaptation of the opening passage of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*. At the order of Zeus, the Usurper, Prometheus is seized by the giants Terror and Error and chained by the blacksmith to the rock. The blacksmith dares not refuse to perform his task; he loves Prometheus, who taught him the arts of peace, but he fears the Usurper more. When the horrible blow through the breast has been struck, and Prometheus is left alone with his agony, he is visited by the nymphs who ride the waves of the aether, the waves which Zeus has harnessed to carry his lies and tyrannical commands. The nymphs eye the suffering hero with sadistic pity; his pain excites them; they whisper words of hypocritical comfort. But Prometheus, even in his blackest hour, scorns their offer of compromise. Zeus may crush the whole world beneath the wheels of his hatred; Prometheus confronts him unmoved, knowing himself to be the stronger; Love is always the victor, even exiled and in chains. The silly chattering nymphs cannot understand this; they mistake the faith of Prometheus for arrogance and pride; they shake their heads over him in despair:

"Dann freilich
Kann Zeus dir nicht vergeben."

But there is no question of Zeus forgiving or not forgiving; the power is not in his hands; he has no authority to bind or to loose. No doubt there are fish who would like to be birds. We know there are human beings who dream of turning themselves into all-powerful, pitiless devils. But the fish, for all their day-dreams, cannot breathe the air; and the usurpers, even loud-mouthed Zeus himself, are limited by the laws of their nature. We are only men, after all. Devils may thrive on fire and hate and brimstone. We—humiliating, unpalatable and boring as it may seem —have to swallow down the home-truths which Jesus and Prince Kropotkin taught us: love is our air and food, by mutual aid alone we live. And so torturing Zeus will have to step down from his stolen throne at last and unchain tortured Prometheus; tyrant and victim will have to unite in bringing back the fire to mankind. That, after a thousand disappointments and then thousand defeats, will and must be our destiny. That is why Viertel tells us not to be afraid. CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

YOGI-BOGEY

Grey Eminence. By Aldous Huxley. Harper & Bros. $3.50.

Ostensibly *Grey Eminence* is a biography of Father Joseph, the aristocrat who became a Capuchin friar and later an agent and collaborator of Richelieu. By lending his sinister talents to the promotion of the

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Thirty Years War and the preparation of France for the tyrannical nationalism of Louis XIV, Father Joseph became one of the forgers of "the long chain of crime and madness which binds the present world to its past." As a biography the book is an only partly successful product of Huxley's now rather flaccid and uncritical intellectualism. But it is not meant to be primarily a biography. It is a piece of propaganda for the religious mysticism which Huxley and Gerald Heard have transplanted from the quagmires of British pacifism to the propitious atmosphere of Southern California. Heard's eight or nine volumes on the subject constitute the official historiography and teleology of the sect. Huxley, since the appearance of *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936), has functioned largely as a publicist for the new religion. In this latest book, the life and character of Father Joseph symbolize what Huxley and Heard take to be the dilemma of civilized man.

Gerald Heard believes that the wars and revolutions of modern times are the result of a profound human neurosis. The human psyche, a harmony of altruism and mystical social affection in the primeval Golden Age, has been "fissured"; the human being has become self-conscious and "individualized" and, consequently, evil. The individualized part of the psyche, says Heard, is responsible for the barbarity of our civilization. We are told, however, that the religious mystics (the Buddhists, the Taoists, the Christian mystics, the Quakers) have learned how to lead mankind back to the original harmonious psyche. The mystics have discovered the therapeutical technique of contemplation, which is the process of self-annihilation, the merging of self-consciousness into Ultimate Reality, and the merging of the individual will into the "Essential Will."

Huxley's Father Joseph symbolizes the fissured psyche of mankind in general. On the one hand he is the heir of the vaguely orientalized tradition of Christian mysticism. He has learned the method of self-annihilation and the affective reunion with God. He carries on the pacific philanthropy of the dedicated saint. But on the other hand he is the individualized man of action, the cynical manipulator who bribed the Swedish Protestants to fight the German Protestants and who was otherwise instrumental in furthering the war which killed one-third of the population of Germany. Father Joseph, to put it mildly, is a split personality.

The absurdity of this purely psychoanalytic explanation of history and human behavior becomes apparent when Huxley ascribes Father Joseph's anti-social conduct to a flaw in the technique of mysticism by the time it had come down to the early seventeenth century. Father Joseph has hallucinations of Christ on the cross in his moments of mystic trance (which seem, by the way, to border on a state of catalepsy). But since the purpose of the mystic experience is the annihilation not only of the self but also of all worldly imagery, Father Joseph's reunion with Ultimate Reality is never completely accomplished. In other words, Father Joseph's psyche remains "fissured," and *he* remains both a benevolent mystic and an immoral politician.

The lesson of *Grey Eminence* is that Father Joseph should have re-

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fused to have anything to do with political or military action. His true destiny was to be a "theocentric saint," detached from the criminalities of his time. Huxley proceeds to urge all those who are capable of the mystic experience to form a caste of saints (Heard calls them neo-Brahmins) who will have an "antiseptic and antidotal function" in present-day society. The saints are to begin their religious teaching in small groups, finally, as their teaching and good works become accepted, bringing about the decentralization of government and industry into "federated . . . local and functional" autonomies.

The most curious thing about this book is that it might have been written, in slightly different terms, by, let us say, a Buddhist who had only recently become acquainted with the social problems of Western culture and whose knowledge thereof consisted largely of a few epigrams. Why, for example, should we believe that even a "well-intentioned" plan of political action "must be pursued for its own sake, as an end in itself"? There is no evidence that political planning must degenerate into bureaucratic atrophy because it is the nature of political planning to do so. Huxley's use of his favorite scare-word "political" is highly arbitrary: "the great paradox of politics," he says, is "that political action is necessary and at the same time incapable of satisfying the needs which called it into existence." But surely not many social thinkers are still psychologically narrow enough to maintain that purely political action, except perhaps in isolated cases, is capable of satisfying the diversity of human needs. And are we supposed to believe that the "quality of moral behaviour varies in inverse ratio to the number of human beings involved"? That kind of catch-phrase ought to have expired along with the dogmatisms of the "crowd psychology" books which came out of the first World War.

The altruistic morality and the social affection of the mystics are admirable; but from the time of the Buddhist heresy down to the Quakers, this altruism has been accompanied by various unsavory anti-speculative and anti-intellectual tendencies. Huxley follows the pattern, for he rejects not only power politics but *all* kinds of rationally-conceived social action. He attacks not only the grosser kinds of pragmatic thought but *all* "analytic thinking and imagination," for these prevent "enlightenment."

Huxley's early satirical novels had a fine strain of biological irony and a kind of materialist wit in them. We need a novelist of that sort to deal with some of the current aberrations of the bourgeois mind, such as religious mysticism, for instance. RICHARD V. CHASE

THE EGO AT LARGE

The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. By Vladimir Nabokov. New Directions. $2.50.
The Wisdom of the Heart. By Henry Miller. New Directions. $2.50.
The Wife of Martin Guerre. By Janet Lewis. Colt Press. $2.50.

Mr. Nabokov is among those writers concerned exclusively with themselves, who have to achieve a kind of personal salvation in whatever they write. They are the perfectionists, treading the thorny path of self-

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imposed difficulties. They thread their meanings through the ego's eye with such ascetic devotion that not even their best friends can read the symbols on their signposts. Like other methods, which all have their counterparts in ways of life, perfectionism also has its virtues. At best it is so serious on the personal plane that it is quite likely to be serious on the artistic plane. But I do suggest that a novelist must see others in their own right as different from himself, and that for him perfectionism is most dangerous.

The author endeavors to trace a biographer's progress in search of the real life of his subject. This main or omnibus theme contains numerous passenger themes, and gives the book what integrity it has. The subject is a writer, Sebastian Knight (Saint Sebastian; the black knight in chess), who was born, parenthetically enough, on December 31, 1899 (click), on a cold windless day (no click); who wrote novels in a style of "terrific vigor" that received both good and bad notices; and died young. The pilgrim-narrator-biographer is Sebastian's half-brother. The recollections of Sebastian's friends and married sweethearts, and the biography of Sebastian written by his agent and secretary, one Goodman, represent the false conception of the writer's life. There are, of course, Sebastian's novels, or at any rate sufficiently long quotations and descriptions from their "heroes," as their themes are called. The heroes include "methods of composition," "methods of human fate," and by comparison, a strangely lifelike hero, a dying man. The heroes are themselves subjects for research, so that what we seem to have is a grand research for the one principle that will at least define the writer's pattern of reality, and reveal something of his inner life.

In this carefully constructed maze of meanings tricked out with the sliding panels and secret doors of identities, equivocations, and false clues, the author's intention is inextricable. It bobs up now and then, however, as part of the total confusion. What is intended is to make the meaning of the book identical with reality, therefore open to all meaning, as a person's life can be subjected to all interpretation—my book is an open life. Whatever is written must inevitably take on meaning, all meaning, at one and the same time. This is known as the horizontal or supine school of writing, characterized by an amorphous intention which relieves the writer of all responsibility for making up his mind and saying what he means. The world outside the ego does not exist, and does not, therefore, make sense. It is a game of chance. And so the search for Sebastian's life is told in terms of a game of chess, in a series of moves ending in a checkmate. One move determines the next, but what determines all is the chessboard of the so alien world. The chess game provides the book with whatever frame it has, and is a key to the treatment of time and space, and to a curious kind of luck-is-all-good philosophy based on the mystery of chance. It doesn't matter then, that the dying man the narrator has come to see turns out not to be Sebastian. The emotion the narrator feels in the presence of the dying man he believes to be Sebastian, is all that matters.

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The give-away which cancels the entire glossary of terribly clever tricks, is the fact that the narrator and Sebastian are identical, both are identical with the author, and the book is not a biography but an autobiography. There is no search for the real life of Sebastian. The author is really in search of his own life. And the characters—the narrator who turns into Sebastian, or Madame Lecerf who pretends to be her own friend —all of them, are merely schizophrenic stooges. The result of all this superimposition is zero. There is no life in the book, and there are really no characters. Sebastian's "life" is not reconstructed, "things past" are not remembered, no knowledge or order are found. What is more, it is not only that when all things are meant nothing is meant, but that a book built on a world created and peopled by oneself, and palmed off as reality, is essentially dishonest. The book is as false to the author as it is to life.

When the writing is straight it is good, but good by such superficial standards, that it doesn't matter. Mr. Nabokov believes that the right word unlocks all mysteries, like the Holy Ghost. "No real idea can be said to exist without the words made to measure." So he dismisses sex "because the very sound of the word 'sex' with its hissing vulgarity and the 'ks, ks' catcall at the end, seems so inane to me that I cannot help doubting whether there *is* any real idea behind the word." The overrun metaphors—whole catalogs of them—are contrived. A fair example is the portrait of an Adam's apple "moving like the bulging shape of an arrased eavesdropper." Or, "a fifth was the letter of a spy with its steely secret hidden in a haystack of idle prattle." "Our life together was alliterative," written in a love letter, is my favorite. The notion that writing is a holy mystery, and the description of the pangs of creation Sebastian suffers when he writes, reflect the attitude of minor writers. In point of fact, Sebastian does not suffer as a writer, unless heart trouble is artistic, or to be lonely and maladjusted is to be an artist. The life of the writer is sentimentalized into nothing more than the old notion that writers are successful in proportion to their unpopular appeal. Mr. Nabokov's book may be read with interest as a curious piece of fiction, or may indeed be read with great pleasure by those who I am sure will enjoy its faults. But when the book is closed the book is dead. Nothing remains.

I also found Henry Miller's new book easier to close than to open. I find Miller extremely boring. It is not merely his eternal fascination with himself, but the enthusiasm of his fascination that is wearing. It doesn't matter what's in the book; one either reads Henry Miller or one does not. Miller doesn't really write, nor does he take writing seriously; he is concerned with salvation, his own and everyone's. He destroys the world by turning it into a song of himself. He writes in a prose belonging to poetry, in an unending flow which has the suffocating quality of an irrelevant and overlong confession. One listens rather than reads. There are a few pages worth while, and now and then, wrapped up warm and comfortable in the blanket of his plenitude, a sympathy and tenderness that are touching.

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In contrast to the perfectionist who is concerned with himself to the exclusion of the world, Miller includes the whole cosmos in himself, at a certain risk to himself, if not to the cosmos. He excludes nothing. Miller believes that life is art, and Nabokov believes that art is life. I prefer Miller because there is a sediment of real understanding in the stream of his vaticination, and I have a good deal more respect for him because he is honest—he says he is dishonest. Whereas Miller announces the fact that he is destroying the world, Nabokov pretends to create it. And unlike Nabokov, Miller's writing is indigenous; it is part of his own cultural tradition. There are two essential moods in American writing: emotion set free through personal confession, for example, Whitman and Melville; and emotion submerged and frustrated, Hawthorne, for instance. Miller belongs to the first. "Immediately I heard my own voice I was enchanted: the fact that it was a separate, distinct, unique voice sustained me." The discovery of the self obliterates the world and its eternal enmity, and assumes a cosmic importance that carries with it a propulsion to regenerate mankind. The hard-earned victory must be proclaimed so that others may be freed from the world. Since one cannot know and believe at the same time, facts do not exist, nor the processes by which they become knowledge and entail responsibility. There are solutions, of course. "I lived out the social problem by dying" is certainly a solution. Man is good; it is Utopia or nothing. "We stand at the threshold of a new way of life in which MAN is about to be realized. . . . I believe it absolutely. I know it to be so from my own experience." There is no limit to what Miller believes—"I believe everything"—no limit to what he wants, and no limit to himself or to his writing—"A process which appears more and more inexhaustible as I go on."

The scene of Janet Lewis's short novel is laid in France, near Toulouse, in the second half of the sixteenth century. The story, based on historical sources, is psychological—the distraction of a wife who believes that the husband who returned to her after an absence of eight years, is not her husband, but an imposter. The reconstruction of the life and feeling of the time is a difficult task well done, but hardly worth doing at all. It does not quite come off; the life it materializes is too spectral. There are also shortcomings, not too important, where it appears the author had no source to guide her. However, the lack of pretentiousness in this book was restorative.

H. P. LAZARUS

Letters

PARODY AND STYLE

Sirs:

Mr. Jarrell's parody of Miss Moore's verse in your January-February issue suggests to me this question: Could you persuade Miss Moore to comment on it, with particular attention to the technique of style? If she would do this, and analytically enough, we should have a valuable exposition of just how she accomplishes her special effects.

The idea occurred to me because when I read the parody it seemed to me that it looked like Miss Moore's work but did not sound like it, the sound effects being all wrong. I could not myself explain just why, but wondered if she herself would not be able to anatomize the problem. I suspect that it rests primarily on

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the sentence-rhythm, and also on the vocabulary in its phonetic aspects. Her sentences read as pure prose have a distinctive cadence that is missing in the parody. One might say (and get his ears slapped down) that her metrical patterns are like a Christmas tree upon which she hangs the tinsel-ropes of sentences; the tree has its own intricate pattern, and so does each rope, and it matters a great deal at just what points one is in contact with the other, but the two are quite distinct entities and exist separately. And Mr. Jarrell's tinsel-ropes are entirely different from Miss Moore's; maybe she would know why.

To state the question briefly: Why, on the basis of internal evidence chiefly phonetic and linguistic, can this *opus* be confidently assigned to another hand? Perhaps Miss Moore would like to scrutinize her own *Clauselgesetze* in the same fashion as Zielinski did Cicero's.

MYRON H. BROOMELL

URBANA, O.

Sirs:

I cannot comment on Mr. Jarrell, for though a parody helps by making light of what was meant seriously, I don't see that I would help by taking seriously something that was meant lightly. But I am willing to set down the following helps to composition, by which privately I am trying rather rigorously to be guided:

1. Break long sentences with dependent clauses, into separate sentences.
2. Where possible, avoid expanded explanation subordinated by hyphens.
3. The doubled meaning or punning force of unconscious useful ambiguity that poetry inevitably has, must not be allowed to become equivocation.
4. Any form of conscious or unrectified obscurity is bad.

BROOKLYN, N. Y. MARIANNE MOORE

ANTI-ORWELL

Sirs:

Orwell has gone too far. I have been intending to write a note of slight dissent from certain of his statements for some time now, but after his reply to Nicholson I feel that his position as PR's English Correspondent is decidedly an error.

So there is no international solidarity of the working class because Stalin can't rally the German workers behind "the Socialist Fatherland." And to be anti-war in England is to be pro-Hitler because Stalin doesn't want one to be anti-war. I submit that this is a curious note for a regular contributor to PR to be sounding. Perhaps Mr. Orwell is leading a double life and his *Daily Worker* personality got short-circuited with his PR one? Or did the statement in his letter of a few issues ago to the effect that he now wished Stalin well mean that all is forgiven? In any case Mr. Orwell's critical reputation, if any, would be more secure now had he *not* been given an opportunity to reply to Nicholson's charges.

Incidentally, the thesis that Lenin was pro-German in the First World War, while given much publicity in the bourgeois press, is rather startling coming from a Marxist. The dog returns to his father's vomit?

HOLLEY R. CANTINE, JR.

BEARSVILLE, N. Y.

In the interests of simple accuracy, we must point out that Mr. Orwell, so far as we know, is neither a contributor to the Daily Worker *nor a Marxist.*—ED.

ON VICTOR MARGUERITTE

Sirs:

Victor Margueritte died this March in France at the age of 76. I don't know whether he still lived in that decrepit little apartment on the Boulevard de Courcelles where I used to visit him in the months just before the fall of France. Old and blind and extremely emaciated, he had a remarkable nobility of feature—the type of old French officer of the last century—and of character. His mind was still restless and curious. We had long conversations on the Moscow Trials, on the strange moral debility of the French intelligentsia, and on the war, which he hated in a romantic way (being the son of the general who, in '70, commanded the charge of the cuirassiers at Reischoffen). A writer of social novels that enjoyed an easy popularity, (*Prostituée*, *La Garconne*) he had once exploited, with a talent for the common touch, his knowledge of Paris, the public's taste for scandal, and also a certain left-wing morality. When old age, death, straightened circumstances, and blindness overwhelmed him, he revealed a kind of stoicism—

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simple, clear-minded, and not without grandeur.

His development in the last few years typifies the disorientation of many such intellectuals. In the first days of the war, he signed — together with Deat, Jean Giono, Alain, and the anarchist, Lecoin— a manifesto calling for "peace at any price" and motivated only by "the horrors of war." Prosecuted, most of the signers, with Deat in the lead, repudiated their signatures. Alain and Lecoin stood firm, as did Margueritte; I don't know what Giono did. It was all in all a rather miserable business, in which Margueritte showed real moral courage. "Nothing," he used to tell me, "nothing can justify war; nothing could be worse." His point of view was that of anarchist pacifism and was really little more than a sentimental reaction. He saw the debacle of June, 1940, with no doubt great chagrin, but probably without surprise, having spent most of his life denouncing the corruption of the Third Republic after the crushing of the Commune. When the former Socialist minister, Spinasse, founded *L'Effort*, "an organ of national reconstruction," to support — with the help of former associates of Leon Blum, who was at once imprisoned—the Marshal's policies and the idea of collaboration with the Nazis; when this sheet appeared, I was saddened to read in it an article by Victor Margueritte celebrating, in oblique terms, the 'reconciliation' with Germany.

VICTOR SERGE

MEXICO CITY

TASTE AND EGO

Sirs:

So now, after its skirmish with Brooks, MacLeish and the culture police, P.R. itself comes out against taste and individuality—new recruit in the campaign for vulgarity and literary hara-kiri.

What does the "Note by the Editor" [Clement Greenberg] which precedes the poetry in the last issue, counterpose to "current good taste" and the "enthusiastic ego"? Some new revolutionary mood perhaps? Some advanced technical insight? No, he "does not necessarily mean Experiment." He means "Behold now Eros as the midnight groom." He means complete power to his own taste (not good) and his own ego (unenthusiastic).

Also writing on art in same issue (why not?) this opponent of the "enthusiastic ego" refers to himself, his tastes and opinions no less than 10 times on 1¾ pages. Soon we may expect—the obstacle of good taste having been cleared away—to have the pleasure of reading the Complete Man's own verses.

HAROLD ROSENBERG

WASHINGTON, D. C.

—Mr. Rosenberg seems to read my stuff rather closely.—C.G.

"THE MEN FROM JAVA"

Sirs:

Your readers may be interested to know that Jean Malaquais' novel, *Les Javanais*, has been published over here in English as *The Men From Java*. It is put out by a small Polish firm, Minerva, whose books are distributed by Faber & Faber. The translation—it is competent and fluid—is by John Marks. I have a loan copy on my table at this minute, borrowed from the local public free library of Whitstable (a small oyster and fishing village). I asked them for *The Men From Java* some six weeks ago and was told they had already ordered the book on the strength of a warm review in the *Times Literary Supplement* (which is equivalent to being blessed by a bishop).

KENT, ENGLAND ANTONY MANTON

HOBSON'S CHOICE

Sirs:

Victor Serge's description of his last days in France ["On the Eve," PARTISAN REVIEW, Jan.-Feb., 1942] well illustrates why contemporary left-wing parties there and here failed to win the allegiance or even the respect of countless potential supporters. In France, the feeble united front, bewildered and torn by the irreconcilability of its domestic programme and the growing military threat from without, was never a possible adversary for the streamlined, concentrated German expansion machine. In England, left wing politics were so disunited and drained of strength by internal feuds that it would have been a full time occupation to follow the course of the private battle.

Very many men of good will in Europe, while understanding the significance of

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the class struggle, governed their actions by the conviction that if a means to the end of making life more fully livable shows signs of decadence and exhaustion, it is better to manage as best you can in your own metier and not waste time feeding a growth which must wither before it grows strong.

It is easy to reproach these men in trite party jargon. But what was their alternative. To join the communist party of Great Britain—known, since the Soviets have become our allies, as the Royal Communist Party of Great Britain? For my part, I would as soon dwell under fascism which I abhor, as ally myself to the servile uncritical orthodoxy, the soured, uncharitable hypocrisy of the party over here. The English *Daily Worker*—rest its soul—was as dishonest and spiteful a publication as anything the capitalist press of this country has to be ashamed of.

Most of the best minds who have turned their attention away from politics are artists and scholars. It never has been their rôle to weld parties together; and the side which should have been able to call upon their support is divided by careerists who reserve their strongest hate not for fascists, but for Trotskyists, revolutionaries who derive their ideology from the same roots as themselves.

At our universities communism remains what it has always been there. Undergraduates play at being communists as Marie Antoinette played at being a milk maid. There are a few splendid unsung and isolated young fighting proletarians in the junior ranks of the party. As I am neither an artisan nor a social worker and have adapted my life to my unfaith, I see them less and less often.

With best wishes for the continued success of P.R.

JOHN CHANDOS

LONDON, ENGLAND

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RICHARD WRIGHT: *The Man Who Lived Underground*
(two excerpts from his first novel since *Native Son*)

DELMORE SCHWARTZ: *The Writing of Edmund Wilson*

ROGER MARTIN DU GARD: *Confidence Africaine*
(a *nouvelle,* with a critical note by John Jamieson)

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER: *Affectation of Praehiminincies*

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FROM THE STEEL COUNTRY

Sirs:

PARTISAN REVIEW is a rare necessity at a time when the field is so barren of any thought whatsoever. It is particularly interesting for the ironical contrast presented between the height of thought existing in the intellectual world of the Big City and the dregs of thought to be found (for only one example) in this steel country.

On the whole I have praise for the magazine. But may I add a word of criticism on the short stories. The short stories have the peculiar tang of the isolated Big City knower-alls who look down with a sympathetic cynicism on the provincial world outside.

It is late to comment on the questionaire conducted but I should like to bring attention to two things which seemed to me to be important. First, the tiny insignificant percent of readers that are from the "mass." To an extent a culture can be judged by its weakest link. The strength of PARTISAN REVIEW in its struggle to preserve present cultural values and its desire to attain ideal cultural values can, too, be judged by this weakest link. Second, the geographical location of the readers, that the readers are concentrated in the Big City area.

On the side—I'm 24 years of age, a steel worker, working in one of the largest ammunitions dumps in the country.

ALEXANDER LANG

McKEESPORT, PA.

DANGEROUS THOUGHTS

In its December, 1941, issue *Readers Digest* printed an article by Max Eastman called "Stalin's American Power." Free reprints were offered, and a large number given out. Early in February, 1942, distribution was discontinued, and this letter sent to all who wrote in for the article:

Dear Reader:

This is to inform you that we have decided not to distribute the reprint of the article, "Stalin's American Power."

Our decision is prompted by protests which we have received from some of our readers against any unnecessary post-publication circulation of the article now that our own war effort is so closely connected with that of the Russian people.

While those of our readers who are concerned about the effect on our own war morale seem to us to have overlooked completely the author's express statement that "'common sense demands that we support" the Russian resistance to Hitler, we nevertheless feel that all doubts should be resolved against anything that might operate to disturb our essential war effort.

Very truly yours,

THE EDITORS

LETTER FROM MEXICO

Sirs:

We want to thank PARTISAN REVIEW most warmly for publishing the letter to President Camacho of Mexico, signed by more than two hundred American intellectuals and trade unionists, protesting against the campaign of slander and threats launched against us by the Communist Party of Mexico. The letter was immensely helpful, and has forced our persecutors—for the moment, at least—to abandon their attacks.

Though the readers of PARTISAN REVIEW are probably acquainted with the general nature of our writings and our politics, it may be useful to note here the

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real nature of the whole affair and its moral and psychological character. As to the former, we have all of us posed, in various ways, always with moderation and with regard only for the interests of truth and freedom, the serious problem of Stalinist totalitarianism and the democratic rights of the Russian people. We have stood for free thought as against regimented thought, and have opposed methods which demoralize the workingclass movement. That is the only reason we have been hated and persecuted—some of us for many years—by the Communists. Two of us, in the prisons of the U.S.S.R. and in the GPU prisons of Loyalist Spain, have considered these questions at our leisure—with the executioner's revolver in the background.

As to the moral-psychological methods used in this affair: there is something humiliating and degrading in being forced to defend one's self against accusations that are literally insane, charges which could not stand the slightest examination, put forward without a shadow of proof, but dangerous just the same, since no one would believe that slander could be manufactured on such a wholesale scale. These methods, on a larger stage, served for the Moscow Trials, and, in Mexico itself, for preparing the ideological groundwork for the murder of Leon Trotsky. Our own experience confirms us in our belief that the fight against the poison of totalitarianism requires first of all psychological hygiene. We must patiently try to cleanse social and ideological struggles of slander, of vicious lies fabricated to order, of incitements to pogroms, of such low political tricks as to use the suffering and heroism of the Russian people as a cover for the machinations of the GPU abroad.

May we, finally, through your magazine, express our thanks to all the individuals whose friendly support has been so precious and comforting to us in this affair.

Sincerely,
JULIAN GORKIN
MARCEAU PIVERT
GUSTAV REGLER
VICTOR SERGE

MEXICO CITY

P.S. It has not been possible to get in touch with Grandiso Muniz, but we are sure he would be in general agreement with this letter.

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Aspects of Marxian Economics, *by J. R. Johnson and Joseph Carter*

Social Classes in India—*A Thesis*

What Next in Europe? *by Europacus*

Notes of the Month: War and the Colonial Peoples

The Social Roots of Opportunism, *by G. Zinoviev*

Readers of PARTISAN REVIEW will be especially interested in Irving Howe's article, "The Dilemma of Partisan Review," in the February issue, in which the political line of PR is criticised from a revolutionary Marxist viewpoint. In the current issue of *The New International*, Dwight Macdonald makes a rejoinder, and is answered by the editors.

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